

Third Presbyterian Church
Bible Study - Nehemiah
 Sermon 2
 Who's helping

Nehemiah 3:1-32 (NIV)

¹ Eliashib the high priest and his fellow priests went to work and rebuilt the Sheep Gate. They dedicated it and set its doors in place, building as far as the Tower of the Hundred, which they dedicated, and as far as the Tower of Hananel. ² The men of Jericho built the adjoining section, and Zaccur son of Imri built next to them. ³ The Fish Gate was rebuilt by the sons of Hassenaah. They laid its beams and put its doors and bolts and bars in place. ⁴ Meremoth son of Uriah, the son of Hakkoz, repaired the next section. Next to him Meshullam son of Berekiah, the son of Meshezabel, made repairs, and next to him Zadok son of Baana also made repairs. ⁵ The next section was repaired by the men of Tekoa, but their nobles would not put their shoulders to the work under their supervisors. ⁶ The Jeshanah Gate was repaired by Joiada son of Paseah and Meshullam son of Besodeiah. They laid its beams and put its doors and bolts and bars in place. ⁷ Next to them, repairs were made by men from Gibeon and Mizpah--Melatiah of Gibeon and Jadon of Meronoth--places under the authority of the governor of Trans-Euphrates. ⁸ Uzziel son of Harhaiah, one of the goldsmiths, repaired the next section; and Hananiah, one of the perfume-makers, made repairs next to that. They restored Jerusalem as far as the Broad Wall. ⁹ Rephaiah son of Hur, ruler of a half-district of Jerusalem, repaired the next section. ¹⁰ Adjoining this, Jedaiah son of Harumaph made repairs opposite his house, and Hattush son of Hashabneiah made repairs next to him. ¹¹ Malkijah son of Harim and Hasshub son of Pahath-Moab repaired another section and the Tower of the Ovens. ¹² Shallum son of Hallohesh, ruler of a half-district of Jerusalem, repaired the next section with the help of his daughters. ¹³ The Valley Gate was repaired by Hanun and the residents of Zanoah. They rebuilt it and put its doors and bolts and bars in place. They also repaired five hundred yards of the wall as far as the Dung Gate. ¹⁴ The Dung Gate was repaired by Malkijah son of Recab, ruler of the district of Beth Hakkerem. He rebuilt it and put its doors and bolts and bars in place. ¹⁵ The Fountain Gate was repaired by Shallun son of Col-Hozeh, ruler of the district of Mizpah. He rebuilt it, roofing it over and putting its doors and bolts and bars in place. He also repaired the wall of the Pool of Siloam, by the King's Garden, as far as the steps going down from the City of David. ¹⁶ Beyond him, Nehemiah son of Azbuk, ruler of a half-district of Beth Zur, made repairs up to a point opposite the tombs of David, as far as the artificial pool and the House of the Heroes. ¹⁷ Next to him, the repairs were made by the Levites under Rehum son of Bani. Beside him, Hashabiah, ruler of half the district of Keilah, carried out repairs for his district. ¹⁸ Next to him, the repairs were made by their countrymen under Binnui son of Henadad, ruler of the other half-district of Keilah. ¹⁹ Next to him, Ezer son of Jeshua, ruler of Mizpah, repaired another section, from a point facing the ascent to the armory as far as the angle. ²⁰ Next to him, Baruch son of Zabbai zealously repaired another section, from the angle to the entrance of the house of Eliashib the high priest. ²¹ Next to him, Meremoth son of Uriah, the son of Hakkoz, repaired another section, from the entrance of Eliashib's house to the end of it. ²² The repairs next to him were made by the priests from the surrounding region. ²³ Beyond them, Benjamin and Hasshub made repairs in front of their house; and next to them, Azariah son of Maaseiah, the son of Ananiah, made repairs beside his house. ²⁴ Next to him, Binnui son of Henadad repaired another section, from Azariah's house to the angle and the corner, ²⁵ and Palal son of Uzai worked opposite the angle and the tower projecting from the upper palace near the court of the guard. Next to him, Pedaiah son of Parosh ²⁶ and the temple servants living on the hill of Ophel made repairs up to a point opposite the Water Gate toward the east and the projecting tower. ²⁷ Next to them, the men of Tekoa repaired another section, from the great projecting tower to the wall of Ophel. ²⁸ Above the Horse Gate, the priests made repairs, each in front of his own house. ²⁹ Next to them, Zadok son of Immer made repairs opposite his house. Next to him, Shemaiah son of Shecaniah, the guard at the East Gate, made repairs. ³⁰ Next to him, Hananiah son of Shelemiah, and Hanun, the sixth son of Zalaph, repaired another section. Next to them, Meshullam son of Berekiah made repairs opposite his living quarters. ³¹ Next to him, Malkijah, one of the goldsmiths, made repairs as far as the house of the temple servants and the merchants, opposite the Inspection Gate, and as far as the room above the corner; ³² and between the room above the corner and the Sheep Gate the goldsmiths and merchants made repairs.

Questions

1. When have you most enjoyed working with a team of people? What about least?
2. What do you think prevents people from asking others for help when they need it?
3. Why do you think the people of Jerusalem were so committed to rebuilding the city walls?
 - a. Why do you think there is a universal lack of true commitment to the work of the church?
4. The high priest and other fellow priest went to work rebuilding the sheep gate in verse one. How does the pastor and or pastor/elders working first influence your work for the ministry?
 - a. If the leaders were not working would that deter your work for the ministry God has called you to? Why or why not?
5. What do you feel deters you/other people most about work in the ministry?
6. The leaders of Tekoa refused to help in the rebuilding of the wall. How do you respond to someone who is supposed to help refusing to help on a project (at work, church or elsewhere)?
7. This was an overwhelming task for the few people they had. What is your response to a task that you have to accomplish and there does not seem to be the physical resources (people) to complete the project?
 - a. Do you have an example you can share about an instance such as the one mentioned above?
 - b. What part does your faith play in the accomplishing tasks with limited resources?
8. How can you depend more on the Lord's help to accomplish the work He has given you to do?
9. We are called to be in fellowship with one another and be co-laborers in the work of the Lord.
 - a. What do you think you can do to get more people involved in the work of the ministry here at Third?
 - b. In what ways do you think you should depend more on the help of other believers.
10. This chapter is about facing challenges overcoming insurmountable odds, working together to accomplish a goal and experience the joy of success.
 - a. Speak to a Joy of success you have experienced here at Third.
 - b. What insurmountable odds have we faced and overcome as a ministry?
 - c. To what goal have you been a part of accomplishing here at Third?
 - i. On a scale of 1-10 what do you see your commitment to serving here at Third? What are you putting in place to increase that commitment?
11. Discuss your major takeaways from the Lesson/Sermon.

(3:1-32) Introduction: one of the most honorable endeavors in all the world is that of work, the privilege of using our God given abilities, talents, and resources for a worthwhile cause or project. In fact, our very nature craves meaning, significance, and purpose in life. Thus if we are not actively involved in a meaningful task, project, or employment, we sense a lack of purpose and fulfillment. If we sit around doing nothing, working halfheartedly, or engaging in meaningless or selfish activity most of the time, there is always a sense of emptiness and purposelessness.

On the other hand, if we work hard at our jobs and are diligent in all the tasks we undertake, we are filled with a sense of purpose and fulfillment. This is our very nature, the way God has made us. Therefore, to experience purpose and fulfillment in life, we must strive to work hard and be diligent in everything that we do, seeking to fill our lives with meaningful activities and tasks.

When Nehemiah undertook the task of rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem, he needed above all else workers who would be diligent and zealously committed to the building project. A description of these workers is given in the present Scripture. They stand before us as dynamic examples of how we should work. This is, *Nehemiah's Rebuilding of the Wall of Jerusalem: Three Pictures of Diligent and Zealous Laborers*, 3:1-32.

1. The workers on the north wall and its gates: some laborers worked together in a spirit of unity, but others refused to work (vv.1-12).

2. The workers on the west wall: some humbled themselves and took on the undesirable jobs (vv.13-14).

3. The workers on the east wall: some were hard and diligent workers filled with zeal (vv.15-32).

1. (3:1-12) Workers, Duty—Employees, Duty—Laborers, Duty—Cooperation, Duty—Unity, Duty—Pride, Example of—Sin, Listed, Refusing to Work and Cooperate—Laborers, Sins of, Refusing to Work: first, the workers on the north wall and its gates are discussed. Some of these laborers are dynamic examples of working together in a spirit of unity. But, sadly, others were uncooperative, refusing to work. Note how both the cooperative and uncooperative spirits are emphasized in this point:

1. Significantly, the Sheep Gate as well as a section of the wall were built by the priests (vv.1-2). The priests worked on the construction project just as much as the lay workers. Even the High Priest himself put his hands to work instead of merely supervising the other priests. The adjoining section of wall was built by men from Jericho and the section next to them by a man named Zaccur. The picture is that of cooperation, a unified effort by both clergy and laymen. Everyone, regardless of position or authority, was working together to rebuild the city and its wall.

The Sheep Gate was on the north wall, the only section that had no natural barrier for defense such as a hill. As a result, two lookout or defensive towers were built along the north wall, the Tower of the Hundred and the Tower of Hananel.

The Sheep Gate was close to the temple; thus it was the gate through which animals were brought to be sacrificed at the temple. No doubt it was named the Sheep Gate because of the continual flow of animals that were herded through its entrance.

2. The Fish Gate, one of the main entrances, was built by the family of Hassenaah (vv.3-5; 2 Chr.33:14). Three adjoining sections were built by several families, all cooperating together to accomplish the enormous project. Note that two of the three families actually built two sections each, the families of Meremoth (vv.4, 21) and Meshullam (vv.4, 30). Perhaps these families were larger and able to provide more workers. Or possibly the sections of wall assigned to them were shorter, easier to reconstruct or did not involve removing as much debris. Whatever the case, these families were so committed to the building project that they each undertook two sections of the wall. The family of Zadok built one section of the wall.

Note the word “repaired” (chazaq or hazaq). It means to be strengthened, made strong and firm to withstand attacks. The workers were not laboring halfheartedly, building a flimsy wall. Rather, they were totally committed to doing their best, to building the strongest wall they could.

Unfortunately, not everyone was committed to the project. Some did not cooperate, even refused to take part in the rebuilding project. This is seen in the next section that was built by the people of Tekoa. Their leaders and nobles refused to help. They would not put their shoulders to the work. Tekoa was a small town about 11 miles just south of Jerusalem, and was the hometown of Amos (Am.1:1). The city was close to territory controlled by the Arab Geshem, an opponent of Nehemiah’s and the Jewish returnees. Apparently the leaders of Tekoa either feared Nehemiah or felt like they would lose some of their authority if he became successful in rebuilding the Jewish settlements. Or perhaps the Tekoa leaders and nobles were just too proud to do the work of a common laborer. Whatever the case, the common people and citizens of Tekoa cooperated fully, committing themselves totally to the building project. Note that they built two sections of the wall (vv.5, 27).

The Fish Gate was also protected by the two towers that were strategically placed to defend the north wall. It was probably named the Fish Gate because it was the site where the commercial marketing of fish took place or else because the city’s major fish market was nearby.

3. In building the Old Gate and the sections of wall adjoining it, two great truths are seen: first, how God uses all kinds of people to get a task done and, second, how important a unified, cooperative spirit is. Note these facts:

a. The Old Gate was built by the families of two men: Joiada and Meshullam (v.6). The gate was also known as the Jeshanah Gate, which referred to the city to which the road led, the city that lay on the border between Judah and Samaria (2 Chr.13:19). It was also known as the Mishneh Gate, which referred to the second district of Jerusalem lying on the western hill (2 Kings 22:14; Zep.1:10).

b. People from Gibeon and Mizpah also helped in the project, building the next section (v.7). Their cooperation and commitment to the project is significant, for these two cities were under the authority of the governor of Trans-Euphrates. This means that the governor himself supported the project.

c. Business leaders and tradesmen also supported the project, building the next section (v.8). One of the business leaders was a goldsmith named Uzziel, and the other was a perfume maker named Hananiah. These two business leaders undertook the construction as far as the Broad Wall.

d. Even the political leaders became involved in the building project. The chief ruler of a half-district of Jerusalem repaired the section adjoining the work of the two businessmen (v.12).

e. People who had houses sitting next to the wall also joined in the project (vv.10, 23, 28-30). This suggests the importance of neighbors cooperating together in looking out for and taking care of their neighborhood.

f. The next section and a tower—the Tower of the Ovens—were built by two men, Malkijah and Hasshub (v.11).

g. The other ruler of the half-district of Jerusalem, Shallum, built the next section of wall. Significantly, his daughters jumped in and helped him in the construction, which indicates that both sexes were involved in the project.

The facts to note are that everyone was assigned very specific tasks and that everyone cooperated together in a unified effort. Each person kept his or her eyes on a specific task and worked to accomplish the project. Each used the specific gift God had given. Throughout this chapter, 38 workers and 42 different groups are named, all cooperating and working together to build their city and its walls. Practically everyone was taking part in the project:

⇒ political leaders (vv.9, 12, 14, 16, 19)

⇒ priests (vv.1, 22)

⇒ common people, both men and women (vv.2-4, 12)

⇒ business leaders (vv.8, 32) and craftsmen

Thought 1. Cooperation is an absolute essential in achieving any task that requires more than one person. Oneness of spirit is a must. Unless there is unity, people are moving in different directions, pulling against each other and accomplishing little. The result of pulling against each other is dissension and divisiveness. Think how often dissension and divisiveness rip apart families, friends, workers, classmates, athletes, businesses, social organizations, churches, communities, political parties, nations, and a host of other relationships.

For these reasons and so many more, success in maintaining order and achieving goals is largely dependent upon the harmony of the participants. Listen to what God's Holy Word says:

“Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven” (Mt.18:19).

“And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (Mt.22:39).

“A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all *men* know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (Jn.13:34-35).

“That they all may be one; as thou, Father, *art* in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me” (Jn.17:21).

“So we, *being* many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another” (Ro.12:5).

“Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and *that* there be no divisions among you; but *that* ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment” (1 Cor. 1:10).

“For we *being* many are one bread, *and* one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread” (1 Cor. 10:17).

2. (3:13-14) Humility, Duty—Labor, Duty—Work, Duty—Jerusalem, Rebuilding, Spirit Needed—Wall, of Jerusalem, Rebuilt, Spirit Needed: the construction of the west wall was an enormous project that included two gates and over 500 yards of wall (“a thousand cubits” or about 1720 feet). Both the Valley Gate and the 500 yards plus of wall were rebuilt by a man named Hanun and the residents of Zanoah (v.13). Undertaking such a long section of the wall suggests a total commitment to the project by these workers. It is also possible that this section of wall was in better condition than most of the other sections.

The Dung or Refuse Gate was located at the southern point of the city and set above the Valley of Hinnom, which was where the rubbish or garbage dump was located. The stench from the constant burning of garbage must have been almost unbearable. This fact made this particular building project most undesirable, suggesting that these workers humbled themselves to take on the undesirable job.

Thought 1. At times in life we all come face-to-face with unpleasant or undesirable tasks that must be done. How we approach these distasteful or lowly tasks reveals much about our character and attitude. Some people are too prideful to touch lowly tasks, feeling they are too important or too intelligent. Other people would never dirty their hands with common labor, feeling that such work is for common and uneducated laborers.

Far too many of us exalt ourselves above others. We think too highly of ourselves, feeling that we are better, superior, or of more value than others. But this is not what God teaches us. Listen to what God’s Holy Word says:

“Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven” (Mt.18:4).

“But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room; that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher: then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee” (Lu.14:10).

“And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye *shall not be* so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve” (Lu.22:25-26).

“For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of *himself* more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith” (Ro.12:3).

“Let nothing *be done* through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 2:3-5).

3. (3:15-32) Diligence, Duty—Work, Duty—Labor, Duty—Zeal, Duty: work on the east wall included the construction of five gates, named in the Scripture and outline below. However, the important thing to note is the hard, diligent labor of the workers. They were filled with a very special zeal for the task assigned them. One

worker in particular, Baruch, was known for his zeal and diligence (v.20). Several other workers are said to have built two sections of the wall, suggesting that they also had a very special zeal for the work (21, 27). The Scripture and outline are sufficient in helping the reader grasp these verses:

Thought 1. The hard, diligent labor of these workers is a dynamic example for us. In undertaking any task we must be filled with a zeal to do our best.

⇒ Before the Lord, only our best effort is acceptable.

⇒ Think how much could be achieved throughout the world if laziness and inexcusable absences were eliminated from the workplace.

⇒ Think how much cleaner and more beautiful our communities and highways would be if we all joined hands to restore the unappealing sights and then committed ourselves to keeping them clean.

⇒ Think how much longer possessions—homes, vehicles, furnishings, clothes, toys, etc.—would last if we protected them, treasured them, and took care of them.

⇒ Think what students could accomplish if they applied themselves diligently in their classes and studies, striving to put to good use all they had learned.

On and on the list could go. How much more could be accomplished and achieved in every area of life if we worked hard in the areas for which we are responsible. Hard, diligent work—a heart filled with zeal for simply being responsible and for doing all things well—is the duty of every human being. Listen to what God’s Holy Word says:

“Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord” (Ro.12:11).

“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Cor. 15:58).

“Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with *his* hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth” (Ep.4:28).

“And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him” (Col.3:17).

Preacher's Outline and Sermon Bible - Commentary - The Preacher's Outline & Sermon Bible – Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther.