

I. INTRODUCTION.

A. Scripture text: **Nehemiah 12:27-30,43.**

Now at the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem they sought out the Levites from all their places, to bring them to Jerusalem so that they might celebrate the dedication with gladness, with hymns of thanksgiving and with songs *to the accompaniment* of cymbals, harps, and lyres. [28] So the sons of the singers were assembled from the district around Jerusalem, and from the villages of the Netophathites, [29] from Beth-gilgal, and from *their* fields in Geba and Azmaveth, for the singers had built themselves villages around Jerusalem. [30] And the priests and the Levites purified themselves; they also purified the people, the gates, and the wall.... [43] and on that day they offered great sacrifices and rejoiced because God had given them great joy, even the women and children rejoiced, so that the joy of Jerusalem was heard from afar.

B. Some people can really tell a story. For example, the movie producer, Frank Capra is a great story teller. His movie, *It's A Wonderful Life* is a classic tale. No matter how often I see that movie, the final scene brings tears to my eyes.

C. Ezra tells a great story in the book of Nehemiah. A man serving the king, desires to go back and help his people rebuild the temple and the wall around Jerusalem. The king allows him to do so and Nehemiah becomes the great leader of the Jews, who does indeed rebuild the wall.

II. THE WORK WAS DONE.

A. It was a time of great rejoicing. The wall has been completed. Now in Jerusalem, the temple was functional and the wall was complete. It was a time to rejoice! (see Neh. 12:27-30,43).

B. Nehemiah could now return to his serving of the king because the work that he has wished to accomplish was now done. Surely, Nehemiah felt great self-gratification in what had been accomplished under his leadership (Neh. 13:6).

III. THE WORK WAS UNDONE.

A. Word comes to Nehemiah that things are not right in Jerusalem. Some of the things that he had worked so hard to restore and get going again God's way, were not going right.

B. There were four main problems:

1. Tobiah was allowed to store his things in a room of the temple (Neh. 13:1-5).

On that day they read aloud from the book of Moses in the hearing of the people; and there was found written in it that no Ammonite or Moabite should ever enter the assembly of God, [2] because they did not meet the sons of Israel with bread and water, but hired Balaam against them to curse them. However, our God turned the curse into a blessing. [3] So it came about, that when they heard the law, they excluded all foreigners from Israel. [4] Now prior to this, Eliashib the priest, who was appointed over the chambers of the house of our God, being related to Tobiah, [5] had prepared a large room for him, where formerly they put the grain offerings, the frankincense, the utensils, and the tithes of grain, wine and oil prescribed for the Levites, the singers and the gatekeepers, and the contributions for the priests.

a. It was plain, by the reading of the Law that all foreigners were to be excluded. Eliashib, the priest, granted Tobiah a suite of rooms in the temple to store his things. Tobiah has bitterly opposed Nehemiah and the building of the wall. Nehemiah stationed guards and would not let Tobiah and Sanballat in the city, no less the temple (Neh. 2:19; 4:3; 4:7-9).

(Neh 2:19) But when Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the Ammonite official, and Geshem the Arab heard *it*, they mocked us and despised us and said, "What is this thing you are doing? Are you rebelling against the king?"

(Neh 4:3) Now Tobiah the Ammonite *was* near him and he said, "Even what they are building-- if a fox should jump on *it*, he would break their stone wall down!"

(Neh 4:7-9) Now it came about when Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites heard that the repair of the walls of Jerusalem went on, *and* that the breaches began to be closed, they were very angry. [8] And all of them conspired together to come *and* fight against Jerusalem and to cause a disturbance in it. [9] But we prayed to our God, and because of them we set up a guard against them day and night.

- b. In anger, Nehemiah “threw out all of Tobiah’s things (from the temple). Parents, haven’t you, in anger, wanted to throw everything out of your kid’s room because it was such a mess. Now, what part of “clean your room” don’t my kids understand?
2. The priests were working in the fields rather than in the temple (Neh. 13:10-14; esp. v10,11).
I also discovered that the portions of the Levites had not been given *them*, so that the Levites and the singers who performed the service had gone away, each to his own field. [11] So I reprimanded the officials and said, “Why is the house of God forsaken?” Then I gathered them together and restored them to their posts. [12] All Judah then brought the tithe of the grain, wine, and oil into the storehouses. [13] And in charge of the storehouses I appointed Shelemiah the priest, Zadok the scribe, and Pedaiah of the Levites, and in addition to them was Hanan the son of Zaccur, the son of Mattaniah; for they were considered reliable, and it was their task to distribute to their kinsmen. [14] Remember me for this, O my God, and do not blot out my loyal deeds which I have performed for the house of my God and its services.
- a. “I also discovered” means that Nehemiah was wise, alert, and aware of what was going on in Jerusalem once he returned. The church today needs leaders who are observant people, and will take notice when things aren’t right.
- b. The priests were working in their fields to make a living and not living off of the tithes to be paid by the people. Nehemiah, brought the priests back to their posts by having all Judah, bring the tithe into the temple. When the brethren don’t do their part it makes leadership all that much more difficult.
3. The people were working on and thereby profaning the Sabbath (Neh. 13:15-18).
In those days I saw in Judah some who were treading wine presses on the sabbath, and bringing in sacks of grain and loading *them* on donkeys, as well as wine, grapes, figs, and all kinds of loads, and they brought *them* into Jerusalem on the sabbath day. So I admonished *them* on the day they sold food. [16] Also men of Tyre were living there *who* imported fish and all kinds of merchandise, and sold *them* to the sons of Judah on the sabbath, even in Jerusalem. [17] Then I reprimanded the nobles of Judah and said to them, “What is this evil thing you are doing, by profaning the sabbath day? [18] “Did not your fathers do the same so that our God brought on us, and on this city, all this trouble? Yet you are adding to the wrath on Israel by profaning the sabbath.”
- a. The Jews knew better, but had once again slipped into the practice of doing work and conducting business on the Sabbath (see 13:18).
- b. Nehemiah had the gates shut and the priests stationed so that none of the Gentile traders could enter the city and do business on the Sabbath. It took a couple of weeks for them to get the message, but then they no longer tempted the Jews (Neh. 13:19-22).
And it came about that just as it grew dark at the gates of Jerusalem before the sabbath, I commanded that the doors should be shut and that they should not open them until after the sabbath. Then I stationed some of my servants at the gates *that* no load should enter on the sabbath day. [20] Once or twice the traders and merchants of every kind of merchandise spent the night outside Jerusalem. [21] Then I warned them and said to them, “Why do you spend the night in front of the wall? If you do so again, I will use force against you.” From that time on they did not come on the sabbath. [22] And I commanded the Levites that they should purify themselves and come as gatekeepers to sanctify the sabbath day. *For* this also remember me, O my God, and have compassion on me according to the greatness of Thy lovingkindness.
4. The Jews were intermarrying with Gentiles (Neh. 13:23-28).
In those days I also saw that the Jews had married women from Ashdod, Ammon, *and* Moab. [24] As for their children, half spoke in the language of Ashdod, and none of them was able to speak the language of Judah, but the language of his own people. [25] So I contended with them and cursed them and struck some of them and pulled out their hair, and made them swear by God, “You shall not give your daughters to their sons, nor take of their daughters for your sons or for yourselves. [26] “Did not Solomon king of Israel sin regarding these things? Yet among the many nations there was no king like him, and he was loved by his God, and God made him king over all Israel; nevertheless the foreign women caused even him to sin. [27] “Do we then hear about you that you have committed all this great evil by acting unfaithfully against our God by marrying foreign women?” [28] Even one of the sons of Joiada, the son of Eliashib the high priest, was a son-in-law of Sanballat the Horonite, so I drove him away from me.
- a. The Jews had intermarried with the women of Ashdod, Ammon, and Moab. The children that came from these marriages did not speak the language of Judah, but rather spoke in

Gentile tongues (see 13:24). This is what happens when people are unequally yoked; the good are pulled down, and the bad are rarely pulled up.

- b. Nehemiah because violent, pulling out the hair of those who had violated the Law in this way. He made them take a vow (an oath) not to marry in such a way as this again. He even drove away one of the sons of the high priest because he was the son-in-law of Sanballat.

IV. THE WORK WAS DONE AGAIN.

- A. Nehemiah put back the work of the Lord in Jerusalem that had gone astray (Neh. 13:29-31).
- B. Speaking metaphorically, Nehemiah “put another brick back in the wall.” It didn’t make any difference how it came out, he was there to put in back again.

V. WHO WILL “PUT ANOTHER BRICK IN THE WALL?”

- A. Life is much like what Nehemiah went through. It is a never ending story. It does seem to make much different whether you have been working long at something or not, it takes very little time for your work to “unravel” if sin is involved.
- B. Being faithful to God, is a never ending story. There will always be another brick to put back into the wall. There will always be something to fix, mend, or set straight. Lives will continue to need care, direction, and correction.
- C. The point of the sermon today is this: Who is ready to commit themselves to the never ending story? Who will, through thick and thin, remain faithful unto death? Who will be there to help put that brick back in the wall?
- D. Who is in the Xian life, for the long-term?
 - 1. When a good friend goes back on the bottle... it is time to put a brick back in the wall.
 - 2. When your child gets in trouble or is doing poorly at school...
 - 3. When you have cleaned the house a thousand times ...
 - 4. When you have begged and pleaded for someone not to sin and they do anyway ...
 - 5. When someone you have baptized falls away...
 - 6. When you have taught and taught and taught and the person doesn’t respond...
 - 7. When a person sins against you, again, and again, and again...
 - 8. When you have been cheated, robbed, or slandered by someone you care about...
 - 9. When your spouse and you have fought for the “umpteenth” time...
 - 10. When you have tried and tried to do the right thing and no one in your world seems to care...

VI. CONCLUSION AND INVITATION.

- A. I believe that in life, too many times, we quit too quickly. We have tried and tried and tried, and then fail because we quit just before the victory was to be won.
- B. Nehemiah’s life is closed with a prayer, “Remember me, O my God, for good.” God don’t remember me as a quitter, but as one who will never give up on the never ending story of faithfulness. Remember me as one who came and put another brick back in that wall.
- C. Paul said in 1Cor. 15:58, “... you labor in the Lord is never in vain.” God is more concerned about your direction than your position. Are you willing to be part of putting back another brick in the wall in the never ending story of life?
- D. Plan of salvation for non- Xians; erring Xians.