

INTRODUCTION

A group of mobsters in New Orleans were counterfeiting money when their printing press broke down and they ended up printing out a batch of \$18 bills. So boss said they would have to throw them away. One of them said, "There some people in Louisiana that are so stupid, you can pass these bills off on them." So one of them took a whole briefcase full of the fake bills up to a small town. He walked into a little mom-and-pop store and laid that \$18 bill on the counter and asked for change. Without batting an eye, the cashier said, "You want three sixes or two nines?"

A lot of what we're seeing happening today in America is what constitutes counterfeit revival. I've been reading a book about that. There are a lot of things going on that make you ask, "Is that of God?" You can always be certain that when you read the word of God, and you can see the works of God, you know that it's the real thing. As a church and believers, we are always on safe ground if we will simply ask God to do what He's done in the past, because history really is His Story of what he has done in the past and is doing today and he'll still do in the future.

God has a way of working and if we want to do things the way God will bless them, we do them the way he is already blessed them in the Bible. That's what Nehemiah is all about. Nehemiah is about a group of people who faced a challenging building project. A project that was too great for any one person or any small group, and unless the power of God entered into those people, it was a hopeless task. And at Green Acres Baptist Church, that's where we are right now.

As we come to Nehemiah chapter 3, we are going to learn how they did it. Nehemiah 3 is one of those chapters that reads like a Hebrew telephone directory: It's one Hebrew name after another. I like what Ron Dunn says, "When you're reading those Old Testament names you can't pronounce, just to say, 'hard name' and just keep on reading." When we study chapters like this that are just a list of names and genealogies, while they are hard to understand, if you take the time to dig below the surface you will find gold in the word of God.

I believe Nehemiah chapter 3 is every bit as inspired as John chapter 3. I believe it when the Bible says *all* Scripture is God breathed, inspired of God and we can learn a lot from Nehemiah chapter 3 if we'll just take the time. I'm not going to read the entire chapter here, because it's just one name after another and I don't want you to laugh at my mispronunciations of all these names. So let's begin with the first couple of verses and then I'm going to point out mini verses in the chapters as we go along.

We're going to start in Nehemiah 2:20 and catch the last transitional verse. "I answered them by saying, 'The God of heaven will give us success. We his servants will start rebuilding, but as for you, you have no share in Jerusalem or any claim or historic right to it.'"

Nehemiah 3:1-2 (NIV). "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. The men of Jericho built the adjoining section, and Zakkur son of Imri built next to them."

This whole chapter is about hard name building against hard name. When you look at a chapter like this, you wonder what you can learn from it. When you stand back and look at it, you see a group of people who were excited enough about God in their lives to jump in and tackle a difficult task. I call it a faith that works.

Do you have a faith that works? In the New Testament, James says if you have faith without works, that faith is dead being alone. Works without faith are useless also, but a faith without works is dead. We can learn three principles from this chapter.

I. THE PLACE WHERE THEY STARTED.

We're going to see a large group of people participating in the project and they start rebuilding the wall, but where did they start? There is a trend here. Look at verse 10. "Adjoining this, Jediah son of Harumaph made repairs opposite his house." Skip down to verse 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." Verse 28. "Above the Horse Gate, the priests made repairs, each in front of his own house."

When you start any kind of project for God, the best place to start is at home. When these people started rebuilding the wall, they started with the section right in front of their homes. Not all of them did that, because frankly, not all of them lived in Jerusalem, but many of them who lived there started right in front of their own front doors.

The application of that the lesson is that I'm asking you to pray with your family about your participation in God's work. In the next few weeks we'll be asking every member of our church to seek the face of God about your participation in Discover the Joy. If you haven't already begun to talk with your family and pray with your family about it, that's a step you need to take right now. I'm calling upon every husband in this room as the spiritual head of your household to go home and take your wife's hand in your hand and to look her in the eyes and say, "Honey, you and I need to pray about what God wants our family to do in Discover the Joy." Families need to pray about it together now.

I have known for at least two years that that we were to be doing something like this and for the past year, I personally have been praying regularly. "God what you want me and my family to do in terms of a sacrifice for Discover the Joy?" In the last few weeks I brought my wife Cindy into the process. I want God to say the same thing to you that he's been saying to me. It is critically important that all of us start with our homes and our families.

II. THE PEOPLE WHO ARE REMEMBERED.

When you read chapter 3, you realize that apparently the names of these people are so important that not only does God list them here but he mentions them again in chapters 7, 10 and 12. Four times God writes down the names of the people who were faithful in this project. As I told you or not and read all 32 verses here, but I would challenge everyone in this room to go home this afternoon and read the entire 32 verses of chapter 3 and see for yourself that God

is recognizing people who are faithful in this project. There are basically two groups of people in this chapter.

A. Those who worked.

There are 77 different names in here. I would be so much easier if these folks were East Texans, then we could pronounce these names: Billy Bob, Joe Bob and Bob Bob. Instead, we have all these multisyllabic names. Now what is the lesson with all these names? Individuals matter to God. God loves the world, God loves nations, communities, churches and families but it's wonderful to know that individual people matter to God and that's why God has taken the time to write down the names of individuals. It's the same thing in the New Testament. That's why many times Paul took an entire chapter to call out names of individuals who were faithful to God.

The Bible also mentions people who were not so faithful. Individuals and their faithfulness matter to God. God likes to write down names. When I was in grammar school and the teacher would leave the room, she usually assigned some smart little girl to be in charge and if we started shooting spitballs or acting up or talking, that little girls would say, "I'm taking names." In a real sense, that's what God's doing, writing down names and people who were faithful to him are forever recorded in this book. I say forever, because heaven and earth will pass away, but the Bible says, "My word will never pass away." You matter to God and God likes to write things down.

The Bible says there are books in heaven. There are the books of works. I think what these people did and what you're doing is written down in the books of works in heaven but you'd better not count on the books of works to get you to heaven, because the Bible says in Revelation 20 there is an another book in heaven—the book of life. Even when Jesus sent out the 70 disciples in 35 groups of two, they went out preaching and teaching casting out demons. The Bible says those disciples came back rejoicing, because demons were subject under them in Jesus' name. But Jesus said, do not rejoice because demons are subject to you, rather rejoice because your names are written down in the book of life.

If we could pull back the veil of heaven, you would find the book of life in heaven. And for every one of us to have ever turned from our sins, put our faith in Jesus Christ and surrender to Him as Lord, our name is written down in ink that cannot be erased in the Lamb's book of life. When God writes down your name, what does he say about you? Individuals are important to God. You are not one in a million; you're one in about six and half billion.

Look at your fingerprint. Did you know that no person who's ever lived, or will ever live has a pattern on their finger like you have? Look at those other nine fingerprints. No two of them match so multiply 10 by every person on the face of the earth. God has that sense of individuality. You are so special to God as an individual that Jesus said our Father has numbered the very hairs of your head. When I got out the shower this morning and was combing my hair over the sink, God said, "There's number 49, 50, 51..." That's how much God cares for individuals.

1. A variety of people cooperated together.

Let's say God is writing a book right now about the faithfulness of the people in Tyler Texas. What would He put beside your name? I thank God we have the names of these 77 individuals. In addition to individuals, there were 44 different groups; a variety of people cooperated together.

a. Church staff

There were 44 sections of the wall around Jerusalem and there were 44 groups and started working on each one of these sections and they were so diverse, so many different kinds of people, including church staff. Verse 1 says Eliashib the high priest and his fellow priests went to work. As pastor of this church and our wonderful church staff, we are excited and we're willing to make this work.

b. Young people

There were young people involved in this project. "The Fish Gate was rebuilt by the sons of Hassenaah." (vs. 3) And that didn't mean just Hassenaah's boys. According to Dr. Clyde T. Francisco, that was an organized group of young men, sons of Hassenaah, kind of like sons of the pioneers. Dr. Francisco says it probably referred to orphans, young men who worked together. These young people knew there was a job to do and they wanted to be a part of it. For you youth listening to me: We need you. We need you to work on your section of the wall and that's why it's so important for you to help us live by filling those treasure chests and encouraging those around you, because in 10, 20, 30 and 40 years from now, some of you are going to be driving down Troup Highway—if Jesus tarries—and you're going to say, "I had a part in that."

c. Skilled craftsmen

"Uzziel son of Harhaiah, one of the goldsmiths, repaired the next section; and Hananiah one of the perfume-makers, made repairs next to that." (vs. 8) These are people who had good jobs, because they were skilled with their hands, making jewelry, incense, and perfume. These people had soft hands and a cushy inside job wanted to get out there and get their hands dirty.

d. Government workers

"Rephaiah son of Hur, ruler of a half-district of Jerusalem, repaired the next section." (vs. 9) Government workers were involved. He was like a City Councilman or County Commissioner.

e. Women

"Shallum son of Halohesh, ruler of a half-district of Jerusalem, repaired the next section with the help of his daughters." (vs. 12) Women were out there literally working on the wall. Ladies, we need you to get involved. We need you to help rebuild the wall.

f. Non-residents

"The Valley Gate was repaired by Hanun and the residents of Zanoah." (vs. 13) There were even non-residents, people that didn't even live in Jerusalem helping rebuild. They were excited about what God was doing and even though they didn't live there, they wanted to help with the project. Chapter 3 says eight different outlying cities sent people to help.

g. Professionals

"Next to him, the repairs were made by the Levites..." (vs. 17) The Levites were the most highly educated people of the community. They were the ones that did the financial accounting, they were the ones we would compare to lawyers. They pitched in.

h. Servants

"And the temple servants living on the hill of Ophel made repairs up to a point opposite the Water Gate." (vs. 26) The temple servants are what we would call the hourly wage earners.

i. Military

"Next to him, Shemaiah son of Shecaniah, the guard at the East Gate, made repairs." (vs. 29) This man guarding the gate was the closest thing they had to military at the time.

j. Single adults

"Next to them, Meshullam son of Berekiah made repairs opposite his living quarters." (vs. 30) Notice it says "living quarters." Dr. Clyde Francisco, an expert in the Hebrew language, says that was a word that was only used for bachelor's quarters. It would be like an apartment today. Meshullam was a single man and even though he didn't have a family, he wanted to be a part.

k. Retailers

"And between the room above the corner and the Sheep Gate the goldsmiths and merchants made repairs." (vs. 32)

I listed all these walks of life for one simple reason: I wanted you to see the wide variety of people that worked together to get this project done. We are all different individuals with different jobs, different backgrounds and mindsets. But God wants to use a variety of people right here in East Texas to accomplish his work.

What is the New Testament application of this? "So in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others." (Romans 12:5 NIV) That means those people repairing the southeastern section of the wall could never say they didn't need those people up in the northeastern section. They all needed one another. If you are in the body of Christ, you can never say you aren't needed and we all need each other because we are all working together

as part of the body of Christ. Those who were faithful to work is forever recorded in the word of God, not in just one chapter in Nehemiah, but in *four* chapters.

I wish I could tell you that everybody in the chapter was faithful, but they weren't.

B. Those who shirked

Shirked is an English word meaning to avoid work. There were workers and shirkers. "The next section was repaired by the men of Tekoa, but their nobles would not put their shoulders to the work under their supervisors." (vs. 5) That means while 77 people, at least in 44 groups were working on the sections of the wall, there was one group that stood back with their arms crossed and thought they were too good, too noble, to get their hands dirty. It's true throughout the word of God and it is true today: There will always be folks who are too noble. That means they are too good to get their hands dirty joining God in His work. They stand on the sidelines.

Many of you have heard of Ted Turner. Ted Turner's managerial/leadership philosophy can be summarized in a sign that he has in his office in Atlanta that simply says: Lead, follow or get out of the way. I wonder if Nehemiah felt that that way about some of these nobles from Tekoa? "I need one of you guys to be a leader of one of these groups or follower or worker, but if you're not going to do that, get out of the way, because if you're not on the way, you're in the way."

A group of boys were playing and they were at an age when those boys usually play with a lot of noise, but they were sitting in a room and they weren't making any noise. They were so quiet they caught the attention of the resident mom. She walked in and asked what they were doing. Her son said, "We're playing war." She said they were awfully quiet to be playing war. He said, "I know. We're all generals." We need less generals and more soldiers who will get at the front of the battle and get involved.

Sometimes we think that when we approach a project of God like Nehemiah did and like we're doing here that there are three groups—those who get involved, those who are going to bitterly oppose the project and those who are on middle ground. The nobles of Tekoa were not to get involved, but wanted to stand back and watch and see what happened. But the New Testament says there is no middle ground. There is no neutrality when it comes to faithfulness to Christ—and if you get angry at me saying that, how will you feel when you read the words of Jesus? "He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters." (Matthew 12:30). No middle ground. What is God going to write next to your name? Were you a worker or a shirker?

If there was a section of the wall that had not been completed, it would have been disaster for all the rest. So all the people who were faithful have their names are forever recorded and those who didn't work are also forever recorded.

III. THE PLAN.

They followed as they followed a very definite plan. If we want the blessings of God upon our work, we must do it the same way God's people been blessed doing in the Bible. We are going to follow this exact pattern, at Green Acres Baptist Church and Discover the Joy. We're following it right now. What was the pattern?

A. Each accepted their assigned part.

Nehemiah assigned 44 sections of the wall and each one of these groups accepted their part. That's exactly what's happening right here Green Acres Baptist Church. We're not rebuilding a wall and were not even building a building. We're building broken-down lives in the power of Jesus Christ and you have a part in it and I have a part in it. And our parts are different. For it to be successful, each person must accept their part in it.

If you were to ask me what your part is or how much I think you should give to Discover the Joy, I would not tell you, because I'm not the one making the assignments—God Almighty is. He is our captain. He's the one that's making the assignments. "But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be." (1 Corinthians 12:18)

You are the body of Christ and each of you is a part of it. Just one of us can't do it. Ten of us can't do it. A thousand of us can't do it—but if each person accepts the part that God is given them to the glory of God will be done. But if you don't do your part, there will be a gap in the wall and what good is a wall around a city if there's a gap left in it? The enemy comes in. You've heard the expression "a chain is only as strong as its weakest link," God has given you a part of the body of Christ and I'm not just talking about Discover the Joy, I'm talking about Christian ministry, service for Christ, spiritual gifts and if you don't fulfill that part, there's a gap in the wall.

Leon Trotsky, one of the leaders of the communist revolution in Russia, second only to Vladimir Lenin was exiled from Russia in the early 20th century because he was a revolutionary. In 1915, Leon Trotsky visited the United States of America. He was invited to attend a men's Sunday school class in Chicago, Illinois, and later he wrote about this experience, that he had a curiosity about the Bible and a curiosity about Christianity. And he went to this Bible study class and you know what happened? The teacher didn't even show up. And, furthermore, the teacher hadn't even gotten a substitute. So they sat there and basically did nothing and Leon Trotsky left and as far as we know, that's the last time he ever attended a church. There was a part of the body of Christ that left a gap in the wall, who didn't do their part. I just wonder what might've happened in the life of this man who led a nation into 70 years of godless atheistic communism. I wonder what might've happened had there been a spirit-filled-Bible-drilled excited man of God opening the word of God, doing his part in the body. Who knows? We will never know, because somebody missed their part of the wall.

What is your part? I don't know, and I can't tell you what your part is. God knows and God will tell you. That's what we're asking you to do, 60 days of prayer and fasting. That's all we are

asking you to do. Don't you believe there is a God who hears your prayers? Absolutely. And don't you believe there's a God, who if you ask him. "God, what's my part?" He will tell you specifically. If you believe God hears prayers and will answer your prayer specifically and individually, God will. God does. Just ask Him to give you your part and it is up to you. God will accept my part on the wall.

B. The parts were not equal.

I've studied this and I've measured this myself. There were some parts of the wall that were very short, very small, just a tiny little section. Some were only given a gate, not even a part of the wall. For instance, verse 13 says that one group, the residents of Zanoah, repaired five hundred yards! They had the largest section. As you read through chapter 3, you will see some are given little sections and some are given big sections. The parts were not equal.

It's true of us too. God has placed me in the body of Christ and given me a part God is placed you in the body of Christ is given you your part. My part may be bigger because I'm the pastor, but is no more important than your part. Billy Graham's part in the body is bigger than my part but is no more important than your part or my part. The truth is, we're not given equal parts, and so were not expected to do equal in return. We perform in accordance to what we've been given.

Jesus said, "From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked." (Luke 12:48 NIV) So some of you have got some big parts in this and some have small parts, but everybody's got a part. And this should be our theme: Not equal gifts but equal sacrifice.

I told you last week how we are NOT going to finance this building. I said We are NOT going to go to a bank and ask to borrow \$20 million for 15 years at 8.5% interest, because we will end up paying \$35-\$50 million in interest. Let me tell you how else we're NOT going to do this, and the funny thing is there always people in the church that think this is the way to do it. Roughly 3,000 people attend this church. What if 3,000 people each just gave \$200 a month for 36 months? That's \$21.6 million. Simple. *Wrong*. We will not do it that way, because that's not the way God does it. Jesus said to whom much is given much is required. Some people cannot give \$200 a month, like children and retirees living on Social Security.

On the other hand, many of the people in this room spend \$200 a month just eating out and it's nothing to them. That is nowhere near a sacrifice for you and that's not the way we're going to do it, because they didn't have equal sections of the wall. What is a sacrifice for me may not be a sacrifice for you and what is a sacrifice for that widow may not be a sacrifice for business owner.

C. As each performed their part, the project was launched

"So we rebuilt the wall till all of it reached half its height, for the people worked with all their heart." (Nehemiah 4:6 NIV) We're going to be asking some of you make visits next Sunday

deliver packages to Sunday school members, asking some of you to make phone calls; do a variety of things. May be said of you that the people worked with all their heart.

CONCLUSION

We're in the building business but not in bricks and mortar. We're in the business of letting Jesus build lives.

Princes & Kings

Isn't it strange how princes and kings,
and clowns that caper in sawdust rings,
and common people, like you and me,
are builders for eternity?

Each is given a list of rules;
a shapeless mass; a bag of tools.
And each must fashion, ere life is flown,
A stumbling block, or a Stepping-Stone."

R. Lee Sharpe

When God writes down your name, is he going to write "faithful worker" beside it? You did your part on the wall? Ask God what your part is on the wall and gladly accept that task.

OUTLINE

I. THE PLACE WHERE THEY STARTED

II. THE PEOPLE WHO ARE REMEMBERED

A. Those who worked

A variety of people cooperated together:

- a. Church staff
- b. Young people
- c. Skilled craftsmen
- d. Government workers
- e. Women
- f. Non-residents
- g. Professionals
- h. Servants
- i. Military
- j. Single adults
- k. Retailers

B. Those who shirked

III. THE PLAN

A. Each accepted their assigned part.

"But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be." 1
Corinthians 12:18

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Nehemiah 4:6 NIV

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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes



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