

SUCCEEDING IN GOD'S WORK

Nehemiah 6.15-7.3

Accomplishing God's work—

So on October 2 the wall was finished—just fifty-two days after we had begun. When our enemies and the surrounding nations heard about it, they were frightened and humiliated. They realized this work had been done with the help of our God. (6.15-16)

- The rebuilding of the walls was of utmost importance to God; it was His prophetic intention. But for decades, His “holy city” had remained in disgrace while those who represented His purposes were preoccupied and distracted with their own agendas.

- For that reason, God sent the prophets Haggai and Malachi to rebuke His people for their misplaced priorities and spiritual failure.
- It is crucial for us to understand that when God's priorities are neglected, spiritual failure occurs. The people became spiritually lukewarm (something which is obnoxious to God) , blind to their own spiritual shortcomings and self-justifying. Neglecting God's priorities is spiritually destructive!

- When one man took hold of God's heart, 92 years of inertia, misrepresentation, and spiritual disgrace was reversed in months — and in just 52 days the rebuilding was completed!
- Remember: **God will always be fully committed to the success of those who are available and who will step out in faith.**

- Two factors determined this miraculous accomplishment—
 - (1) The people worked at it with all their heart" (4.6)
 - They saw the work as God saw it: "this good work," and they said "Let us start to rebuild" " (2.18). There is no substitute for taking the initiative.
 - Baruch "zealously repaired an additional section" (3.20). Zeal for God's work is emphatically Christ-like (John 2.17; Psalm 69.9).

Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord.

(Romans 12.11)

(2) The Lord supernaturally enabled them—

“ . . . the surrounding nations knew that the Lord had helped us.”

- In the midst of overwhelming challenges, Nehemiah exhorted the people to:

“Remember the Lord who is great and awesome.” (4.14)

- God’s power will never be revealed unless we step out in faith. Blessing follows trust and obedience. Furthermore, there will never be any testimony to God’s glory unless we are willing to step out in faith to move His work forward.

Compromising entanglements & competing agendas—

“ . . . many in Judah were under oath to [Tobiah]” (6.18)

- Tobiah, who actively opposed the work of rebuilding along with Sanballat and Geshem, was an Ammonite – a nation with a long history of animosity toward the Jews. Nevertheless, Israel had a long history of compromise and entanglement with such people.

- From the time that they had entered the Promised Land, Israel had formed relationships that caused them to backslide.
- When Nehemiah returned a second time to Jerusalem, he found egregious compromise to the point that many of the children no longer spoke the language of God's people (13.23-28).
- Jesus warned that no one can serve two masters; a person will forsake loyalty to one to embrace the other (Matthew 6.24).

- The Apostle Paul warned Timothy that no soldier can be effective while being engaged in civilian affairs; he must be single-minded in his commitment (2 Timothy 2.4).
- The author of Hebrews exhorts us:

Let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith.

(Hebrews 12.1-2)

God's work needs trustworthy people!

I put in charge of Jerusalem my brother Hanani, along with Hananiah the commander of the citadel, because he was a man of integrity and feared God more than most people do. (7.2)

“Many claim to have unfailing love, but a faithful person who can find? (Proverbs 20.6)

- The Apostle Paul wrote to the church at Philippi, telling them that he had no one else who would represent his heart for them because *“everyone else looks after their own interests but Timothy has proved himself faithful as a son”* (Philippians 2.19-21).

- Faithfulness “as a son” is another unique Christlike quality (Hebrews 3.5). Faithfulness is rooted in a fear of the Lord, in an awareness of eternal accountability.
- Remember: Jesus will examine our lives to determine whether we have been faithful in accomplishing his work (Matthew 25).
- The Apostle Paul reminded Timothy, a faithful man, that the work of God depends on generational faithfulness (2 Timothy 2.2). Does God find us to be trustworthy and faithful as our Lord?

Everyone has a responsibility—

Appoint the residents of Jerusalem to act as guards, everyone on a regular watch. Some will serve at sentry posts and some in front of their own homes.” (7.3)

- Everyone has an assignment in the work of Christ.
- Everyone has an assigned role in the body of Christ.
- Everyone (truly born-again by the Holy Spirit) has a spiritual gift.
- The big question is: **Am I fulfilling my assignment and responsibility?**

What do you need to do?

- **Be available.** Availability is the first hardest step because it requires surrender – making Christ Lord of your will and life.
- **Show up – on time, all of the time.** This is what it means to be trustworthy and faithful.
- **Do something.** Everyone can do something
- **Know your spiritual gift and put it to work.**