

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

NEHEMIAH 1-3

Danny Murtaugh, former Pittsburgh Pirate manager, once said...

“I’d like to have (on my team) that fellow who hits a home run every at bat, strikes out every batter, and throws perfectly to each base from the outfield.

Any manager would want a guy like that... The only problem is to get him to put down his cup... and come down out of the stands and do those things...”

In other words, it’s easier to *criticize*, than it is to *mobilize* – to *talk about it* than to *take action*. And this is especially true in the church. The church today has far too many *pundits* and not enough *players*. We need men and women of action.

Nehemiah wasn’t just a talker – he was a doer. Nehemiah got off the sidelines and into the game. God called him to do a great work, and he obeyed.

Nehemiah led the third wave of Jewish patriots from their exile in Babylon back to Judah. Remember from the book of Ezra - *Zerubbabel rebuilt the Temple - Ezra rebuilt the people* – *but it was Nehemiah who rebuilt the walls* around Jerusalem...

In verse 11 Nehemiah identifies himself, “**I was the king’s cupbearer.**”

In the United States if you don’t like the president the most you have to live with him is eight years. If you help spike the ballot box you can get rid of him in four.

But in a monarchy if you have issues with the king you have to live with him for a lifetime. This is often more than the critics can bear – and in an oriental court it's too easy to bribe an official - or sneak in undercover - to poison the king's punch.

Thus, the cupbearer was the king's first line of defense. If the wine was laced with deadly hemlock he'd be the first to know. Needless to say, Nehemiah was an honest and trusted man. *Thankfully, his services had never been needed.*

Chapter 1 begins with *a person, a date, and a place...*

“The words of Nehemiah the son of Hachaliah. It came to pass in the month of Chislev...” which on our calendar is from mid-November to mid-December.

“in the 20th year...” This was the twentieth year in the reign of one of the most famous Persian emperors, Artaxerxes Longimanus – the exact year was 444 BC.

Nehemiah mentions his location at the time. **“I was in Shushan the citadel...”** Shushan was a tropical, warm-weather get-away - 250 miles east of Babylon - near the mouth of the Persian Gulf – in what is today's Iran. At the time of the Persian Empire, Susa served as the winter residence of the royal family.

According to Nehemiah it was while in Shushan... **“that Hanani one of my brethren came with men from Judah; and I asked them concerning the Jews who had escaped, who had survived the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem.”**

It had been 90 years since Zerubbabel led the first Jews back to their homeland to rebuild Jerusalem. Nehemiah asks

for a progress report.

“And they said to me, “The survivors who are left from the captivity in the province are there in great distress and reproach. The wall of Jerusalem is also broken down, and its gates are burned with fire.” This was all the info Nehemiah needed. If there were no walls not much else had been done.

A city’s walls afforded it protection, and allowed a city to prosper.

If the walls were still rubble the rest of the city was in ruins.

Nehemiah loved his God, his nation, his city. At stake was the future of his people – not to mention, the glory of his God. Work needed to be done. The walls needed to be rebuilt. The news upset Nehemiah. It shook him up.

No pun intended – but **it hit him like a ton of bricks!**

Nehemiah tells us in verse 4, “So it was, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned for many days; I was fasting and praying before the God of heaven.” Hey, Nehemiah was a nice guy - with a nice job - in a nice place - working for a nice man - drawing a nice salary – *until God rocks his world.*

Get the picture... Our man Nehemiah has it made... He’s a Hebrew living in the king’s palace. He sips the king’s wine, and eats the king’s food. He wipes his mouth on the king’s napkin. Nehemiah occupies a prestigious position. He’s on the Persian payroll. He’s a powerful man - and enjoys a luxurious lifestyle.

I picture Nehemiah as footloose and fancy-free – not a care in the world!

This cupbearer's cup is full of blessing... *until one day God spikes his cup of blessing with a burden.* God adds a burden to Nehemiah's blessing. Suddenly, Nehemiah not only bears the *king's cup*, but the *Lord's burden*. He goes from contented to restless – glad-hearted to grieving. He “mourned for many days...”

And I believe this is what God wants to do in every believer... He has a specific plan for your life – a task He wants you to accomplish – a burden for you to bear...

Like Nehemiah, God has blessed you in a million ways - now He wants to add a specific burden to His blessing. He wants to send you on a mission for God.

I've heard it put, “Life's heaviest burden is having nothing to carry.”

A burden from God allows you to participate in *kingdom construction* – to have an impact for eternity... That's the opportunity God gives to Nehemiah!

But notice what Nehemiah does when he receives this God-given burden...

He immediately bathes it in prayer. Verse 5, “And I said: “I pray, LORD God of heaven...” As I said earlier, Nehemiah is a man of action. He's a can-do guy - but he understands that *waiting on God* always precedes *working for God*.

When God *places a call on your life* the first thing to do is *put a call into God*.

Rather than rush out and act immediately. Nehemiah put the

burden on his heart's rotisserie and turned it over and over in prayer. He waited until *his heart was right* – until *the time was right...* until then, *he just sat tight* - and prayed.

And here's how he prays, “O great and awesome God, You who keep Your covenant and mercy with those who love You and observe Your commandments”

He reminds himself that God is *great and gracious* – *awesome and merciful*.

Nehemiah continues in verse 6, “please let Your ear be attentive and Your eyes open, that You may hear the prayer of Your servant which I pray before You now, day and night, for the children of Israel Your servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel which we have sinned against You.

Both my father's house and I have sinned. We have acted very corruptly against You, and have not kept the commandments, the statutes, nor the ordinances which You commanded Your servant Moses.”

Notice what Nehemiah says in verse 6, “*I have sinned*”. He could've blamed the Jews God judged. *The city was destroyed because of their rebellion*. He could've blamed the Jews who had been in the land for the last 90 years. *Why hadn't they made more progress?* He could have blamed Ezra the priest. He left for Jerusalem 13 years earlier. *What's he been doing all this time?*

Instead Nehemiah admits the situation is his fault. Instead of critiquing others, Nehemiah looks inward... *If he'd returned earlier perhaps he could've helped with the work*. Instead he'd

chosen to stay behind to live in luxury in Shushan.

Nehemiah knows a vital truth about leadership... If you want to be part of the solution, first admit your part in the problem. It's been said, "No snowflake in an avalanche ever feels responsible." Most people go to great efforts to duck responsibility, but not the leader. He refuses to play the blame game.

Jerusalem's walls might not be in shambles if Nehemiah had returned earlier.

He says in verse 8, "Remember, I pray, the word that You commanded Your servant Moses, saying, 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations, but if you return to Me, and keep My commandments and do them, though some of you were cast out to the farthest part of the heavens, yet I will gather them from there, and bring them to the place which I have chosen as a dwelling for My name.'" God told Moses, He'd scatter a *disobedient people* – and scatter them He did – but He also promised to bring back a *repentant people*.

If the Jews returned to God – He will work again in Israel.

Nehemiah finishes his prayer, "Now these are Your servants and Your people, whom You have redeemed by Your great power, and by Your strong hand." God kept His promise to scatter them. He'll also keep His promise to gather them.

Verse 11, "O Lord, I pray, please let Your ear be attentive to the prayer of Your servant, and to the prayer of Your servants

who desire to fear Your name; and let Your servant prosper this day, I pray, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man." As the chapter closes notice the phrases "this day" and "this man"...

Nehemiah's prayer gets more specific... He's praying now for an opportunity...

It's true *praying to God and waiting on God* precedes *working for God*, but you get to a point when you've prayed enough. It's now time to take a step of faith.

And that time is nearing for Nehemiah... He closes chapter 1 with the reminder, "For I was the king's cupbearer." His close proximity to the king sets up chapter 2...

Once, a cardinal landed on a windowsill, next to a canary in a cage. The red cardinal looked at the canary, and asked him, "What's your purpose in life?"

The canary answered, "*My purpose in life is to eat seed.*"

The cardinal said, "What for?" "*So I can be strong.*" "What for?" "*So I can sing?*" "Well, why do you sing?" "*So I can get more seed.*"

The cardinal thought for a minute, and shook his head in disbelief... "Now let me get this straight... You eat seed to be strong... so you can sing... so you can then get more seed to eat?" The canary replied, "*That's right.*"

Finally the cardinal told the canary, "You know, there's more to you than that! If you'll follow me I'll help you find it... but first you must leave your cage..."

That's exactly what Jesus is saying to us tonight... There's

more to your life than *going to work – to make money – to buy food – to be strong - so you can go back to work...* Follow Jesus and He'll lead you to a kingdom purpose.

But to follow, you've got to be willing to leave your cage.

In chapter 2 Nehemiah leaves his cage.

Verse 1, “**And it came to pass in the month of Nisan** (which would be mid-March to mid-April on our calendar), **in the 20th year of King Artaxerxes...**”

Remember when Nehemiah heard the news from Jerusalem? Chapter 1:1 told us it was in the Hebrew month of Chislev – mid-November to mid-December. Four months have elapsed. After hearing of the trouble in Jerusalem – and sensing a God-given burden to act - Nehemiah still waits 120 days before he steps out.

Nehemiah knows that *God's work* needs to be done in *God's time*.

Years earlier, God revealed the exact day Messiah would present Himself to Israel. Daniel 9 predicted 69 sets of 7 years that pointed to the date, April 6, 32 AD – the day Jesus rode His donkey down the Mount of Olives into Jerusalem.

But this amazing prophecy had a launch date. It started with “**the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem... the street shall be built again, and the wall...**” Daniel's prophecy was tied Nehemiah's request to rebuild the walls.

Nehemiah may not have realized it, but the 4 months God had him wait fulfilled prophecy. If Nehemiah forced the issue it

would've wrecked Daniel's prophecy.

Hey, God often has reasons we don't *know* – we just need to wait until He says *go!* Isaiah 28:16 describes true faith, "Whoever believes will not act hastily."

When the day finally arrived - "wine was before (the king) (and) I took the wine and gave it to the king. Now I had never been sad in his presence before.

Therefore the king said to me, "Why is your face sad, since you are not sick? This is nothing but sorrow of heart." So I became dreadfully afraid." Part of the cupbearer's job was to cheer the king – tell a funny story – a joke or two...

A gloomy cupbearer might find his head on the chopping block.

Nehemiah's sadness proves you can't harbor a God-given burden for very long without it effecting your disposition and demeanor. Nehemiah is visibly disturbed.

He can't hide his sorrow. The king notices something is bugging his cupbearer.

And Nehemiah answers him, "May the king live forever! Why should my face not be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' tombs, lies waste, and its gates are burned with fire?" Nehemiah realizes the time has come to spill the beans.

Verse 4, "Then the king said to me, "What do you request?" So I prayed to the God of heaven..." I like what one Bible commentator writes, "Before answering the king, it was essential (for Nehemiah) to speak briefly to Someone else."

Nehemiah shoots up a short, succinct, spontaneous cry for

help. It's been called "Nehemiah's arrow prayer". - I like to call it "a flare prayer".

It's one of those prayers we all launch in times of trouble...
"God help!"

And it's a prayer God answers! Jesus said of the Pharisees, "They think that they will be heard for their many words... Do not be like them..." In other words, "It's not the length of a prayer, but the strength of the prayer that counts."

I do think it's important to recall that Nehemiah had been praying and fasting for four months. The flare prayer came out of a concentrated season of prayer.

But the prayer that makes it to heaven does not necessarily consist of a lot of words – rather it's made up of a lot of heart. I like the saying, "Short prayers will make it to heaven if the person praying them doesn't live too far away."

Recently I read a true story that came out of Los Angeles, California.

A woman was upstairs in her bedroom when she heard someone breaking in downstairs. She crawled under her bed with the phone and called 911, but the emergency system was having a problem, and it gave her a menu of options.

Realizing that this would take a minute or more, her mind raced for other ways to reach the police. She grabbed a phone book and called the nearest Winchell's donut shop. She asked the employee if there were any police officers present.

She answered, "Of course!" An officer was put on the line,

and the frightened woman told him her problem. He arrived at her house in time to catch the thief.

The good thing about God is you never have to worry about Him being out eating donuts. He's always on the line. Better than 9-1-1... dial G-O-D.

Nehemiah says to the king in verse 5, **"If it pleases the king, and if your servant has found favor in your sight, I ask that you send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers' tombs, that I may rebuild it."** Nehemiah might not have been expecting it, but here's an opportunity, and he has the presence of mind to jump on it – to act.

A funny story is told of Bear Bryant when he coached at Kentucky.

The Wildcats were playing Tennessee when a runner fumbled in front of the bench. In the mad scramble someone kicked over a box of 8 more footballs.

A free-for-all ensued. Tennessee recovered 5 balls and Kentucky 4 balls.

The referee - not knowing which football was the original - gave possession to Tennessee... Here's the moral of the story: **When the ball bounces your way, make sure you grab it...** Like Nehemiah, faith seizes the opportunity.

Verse 6, **"Then the king said to me (the queen also sitting beside him), "How long will your journey be? And when will you return?"** Why does Nehemiah mention the queen? We're not sure... unless she was fond of Nehemiah.

Perhaps she was urging, nudging her husband to help him in his venture - which would prove God can speak to you

through a nudge from your wife...

“So it pleased the king to send me; and I set him a time.”

Nehemiah is on a roll. He senses God’s hand is on this exchange between he and the king. And if the king is willing to give him permission, why not supplies?

Hey, always remember, real faith is not afraid to ask...

Nehemiah says in verse 7, “Furthermore I said to the king, “If it pleases the king, let letters be given to me for the governors of the region beyond the River (Euphrates), that they must permit me to pass through till I come to Judah, and a letter to Asaph the keeper of the king's forest, that he must give me timber to make beams for the gates of the citadel which pertains to the temple, for the city wall, and for the house that I will occupy.” This is bold! Nehemiah asks the king - not just for permission to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem - but to finance the project.

I’ll never forget, late one night in the Dallas/Fort Worth airport... we were on our way home from a pastors conference we’d attended in California. Pastor James, Jeff Fagan, Kevin, and myself - were sitting in the concourse waiting on a flight.

We were all a little tired and sleepy. We’re sitting there when Jeff Fagan gets up and approaches the ticket counter. He comes back with a first class seat.

Next Kevin and James go to the ticket counter and come back with first class.

Suddenly it dawns on me these guys are up to something –

they're not afraid to ask! So I go up to the ticket counter... *and we all flew home that night first class.*

I wonder how many times God would upgrade our lives to first class if we'd just humble ourselves and ask... We're told what happened when Nehemiah asked... **"The king granted them to me according to the good hand of my God upon me."**

Verse 9 tells us, **"Then I went to the governors in the region beyond the River, and gave them the king's letters. Now the king had sent captains of the army and horsemen with me."** The king provides Nehemiah a military escort. Persian troops are his bodyguard. Because he wasn't afraid to ask, Nehemiah ends up with the king's authority, military protection, and loads of supplies! God wants us to ask.

But a royal entourage riding into town is going to get some attention and raise some eyebrows. Nehemiah's presence and party stir up the opposition.

Verse 10 **"When Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite official heard of it, they were deeply disturbed that a man had come to seek the well-being of the children of Israel."** These guys were forerunners of the Samaritans. They had occupied the land and rose to prominence while the Jews were in exile.

Their opposition will make it tough on Nehemiah throughout his mission.

"So I came to Jerusalem and was there three days." After 900 miles - and who knows how many days and weeks -

Nehemiah finally arrives in Jerusalem.

And notice the first move Nehemiah makes... It's been a long, grueling journey. Once he hits town he does nothing for 3 days. Apparently, he takes time to rest.

Physical fatigue and tiredness can cloud our judgment. It's been said, "The bow that's always bent ceases to shoot straight." You've got to relax the string at times.

Hey, even Jesus took personal retreats to refresh and recoup.

In Mark 6:31, after a busy season of activity Jesus invited His disciples, "Come a part by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while." Hey, "If we don't learn to *come apart* we'll *come a part*." Like Nehemiah we need to renew our strength.

Sometimes when I'm tired the most spiritual thing I can do is take a nap.

Before we go further, let me alert you to the typological meaning in Nehemiah.

This is cool... When Nehemiah rides into Jerusalem he comes with **letters**, **lumber**, and **leadership**! Understand the name "**Nehemiah**" means "**Comforter of Jehovah**." In the NT Jesus calls the Holy Spirit is called "**another Comforter**."

Nehemiah is a fascinating type of the Holy Spirit.

Hey, Jesus wants to rebuild the walls of our lives – our emotional stability, our spiritual health, our personal character, our relational happiness... On the cross He financed the operation. Now He has sent the Holy Spirit to direct the work.

The Spirit's objective in us is to fill in the gaps - repair the

damage sin causes.

And like Nehemiah, the Holy Spirit comes with three tools: **letters** (the Bible), **lumber** (spiritual gifts and blessings), and **leadership** (the Spirit's guidance).

Through God's *truth*, and God's *blessing*, and God's *guidance* we can rebuild the walls of our lives. This book provides us a picture of the ministry of the Spirit.

Verse 12, “Then I arose in the night, I and a few men with me; I told no one what my God had put in my heart to do at Jerusalem...” Here's a mark of good leadership... God is putting a plan in place. The organization Nehemiah hatches is not his own scheme. He says in verse 12, “God had put it in my heart...”

I like how New English Bible puts it, “what my God was prompting me to do...”

God is filling the heart and mind of Nehemiah with all kinds of creative ideas – but Nehemiah keeps his cards close to his vest until he's ready to play them.

When a leader walks around mumbling half-cocked plans and half-baked ideas people label him a dreamer, a babbler... they lose confidence in his leadership.

Nehemiah doesn't open his mouth until he's sure he knows what to do.

Only a few trusted confidants were with him on his night time stroll... “nor was there any animal with me, except the one on which I rode.” He's trying to low-key his walk around the wall. He wants to survey the damage without drawing any

public attention... Nehemiah needs to finish his plan before he proceeds.

“And I went out by night through the Valley Gate to the Serpent Well and the Refuse Gate, and viewed the walls of Jerusalem which were broken down and its gates which were burned with fire.” Nehemiah sees firsthand what he’s up against.

It was a shock to see the devastation that up until now he’d only heard about...

The Hebrew word translated “viewed” in verse 13 and 15 is a medical term. It means, “probing a wound to see the extent of its damage.” Nehemiah inspects the wall in detail. The right remedy is dependent on a good diagnosis.

From the gates and landmarks he mentions it seems Nehemiah started on the west side of the city and walked counter clockwise – first south, then east, then north - back to where he started. Though it was night – though it was dark - Nehemiah saw a lot more than most men saw in the light of day.

He says in verse 14... “Then I went on to the Fountain Gate and to the King's Pool, but there was no room for the animal under me to pass.” The rubble was too thick - the path too cluttered. Nehemiah had to trudge the rest of the way on foot.

“So I went up in the night by the valley, and viewed the wall; then I turned back and entered by the Valley Gate, and so returned.” Verse 16, “And the officials did not know where I had gone or what I had done; I had not yet told the Jews, the

priests, the nobles, the officials, or the others who did the work.”

Nehemiah keeps all his plans under his hat... his hard hat...

And in keeping with the analogy of the work of the Holy Spirit, I hope you realize the Spirit of God has taken many a nighttime stroll around your life.

The Bible teaches us that the Holy Spirit searches the thoughts and intents of our heart. He exposes the areas of our lives in need of repair and refurbishment.

Finally, in verse 17, Nehemiah addresses the Jews and reveals his plan, “Then I said to them, “You see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lies waste, and its gates are burned with fire. Come and let us build the wall of Jerusalem, that we may no longer be a reproach.” Notice, Nehemiah’s appeal is along two lines...

First, he points to the people’s own distress.

Second, he appeals to God’s glory among the nations. The condition of the walls of God’s city has brought shame to His name. It’s injured His reputation.

In essence Nehemiah is saying to the citizens of Jerusalem, “Let’s rebuild the walls... for our good and for God’s glory.” It was a convincing rationale.

I also love the directness of Nehemiah. He shoots straight, and cuts to the chase. Peterson’s paraphrase captures the force of his appeal.

It reads, “Face it: we’re in a bad way here. Jerusalem is a wreck; its gates are burned up. Come – let’s build the wall of

Jerusalem and not live with this disgrace any longer.” A good leader doesn’t gloss over issues that need to be addressed. He doesn’t put a good face on a bad situation just so everyone can feel good.

When he recognizes a problem – he exposes it - and presents a solution.

Nehemiah continues, “And I told them of the hand of my God which had been good upon me, and also of the king's words that he had spoken to me.”

“So they said, "Let us rise up and build." Then they set their hands to this good work.” The Jews made a commitment to do their part in the project.

Hey, every work of God consists of two parts... *God’s part* and *our part*.

It’s been said, “We can’t do God’s part, and God won’t do our part.” A work of God is a tag-team venture. God plays the leading role, but we also play a part.

Ephesians 2:10 says it succinctly, “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works.” *God’s work in us produces our work for God.*

Chapter 2 closes with the Three Stooges. Not Curly, Larry, and Moe - but Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite, and Geshem the Arab.

In verse 19 Nehemiah tells us, “They laughed at us and despised us, and said, "What is this thing that you are doing? Will you rebel against the king?" These men will be Nehemiah’s nemesis throughout the construction. Their

assaults begin with mockery, but their opposition becomes more intense as more progress is made.

Nehemiah's mission was a threat to all three men, but for different reasons...

Sanballat was a Samaritan whose political ambitions would be curtailed by a fortified Jerusalem... *Tobiah* was an Ammonite with connections among the Jews. His ties and influence would be snipped by Nehemiah... *Geshem* was a rich Arab, whose trade and business interests in Jerusalem would be upset by a strong city.

Each of these guys had their own agenda, but they were united in their opposition to Nehemiah. Initially they mock him, and accuse him falsely.

I hope you know if you participate in a mission for God... expect opposition.

Somebody once said, "If you don't believe in the devil, just try working for the Lord." Nehemiah rarely felt the devil's fury in the cozy Persian palace, but now as he decides to bear a burden for God an intense battle rages around him.

In verse 20 Nehemiah stands up to his enemies. "I answered them, and said to them, "The God of heaven Himself will prosper us; therefore we His servants will arise and build, but you have no heritage or right or memorial in Jerusalem." A good leader refuses to be intimidated by the sneers and jeers of the skeptics.

Notice, Nehemiah countered *opposition with position*.

He knew God's promises. The Jews had a God-given right

to rebuild and occupy Jerusalem. Sanballat and his cronies had no jurisdiction at all.

Hey, this is how we respond to our enemy, Satan. Know who you are in Christ.

When you're assured of the rights and privileges you have as a child of God - you can stake your claim, stand your ground, and resist the enemies' threats.

Like Nehemiah, you counter *opposition with position*.

Chapter 3 reveals that Nehemiah was not only a *motivator*, but an *organizer*.

Nehemiah knew the answer to the riddle, "How do you eat an elephant?" The answer: "One bite at a time." That was his plan for the colossal undertaking of rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem. He divided the wall into small sections - then assigned each section to a different family. The wall was built one bite at a time.

Again, Nehemiah is a type of the Holy Spirit – and one of the ministries of the Spirit is to help us find our place in the body of Christ. He bestows upon callings, and ministries, and gifts. He assigns us a place on the wall where we can help build the kingdom. God wants every Christian to be *on the wall*, not *off the wall*!

Chapter 3, "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. Next to

Eliashib the men of Jericho built. And next to them Zaccur the son of Imri built.” And on it goes. Each family had their place.

Notice verse 5, “Next to them the Tekoites made repairs; but their nobles did not put their shoulders to the work of their Lord.” This was a poor example. The leaders were not willing to lift a finger. They were allergic to hard work.

Verse 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.” The Broad Wall was part of the wall built by King Hezekiah. It was still intact. In fact, you can see part of it even today.

Notice too, men who melted gold and made jewelry – and who were skilled at combining spices and oils to make sweet scents – now pick up hard hats, picks, shovels, and trowels... It just made sense for them to go to work on the wall.

At times we have to set aside what we like to do for what needs to be done.

Notice verse 10 “Next to them Jedaiah the son of Harumaph made repairs in front of his house.” Hey, Jedaiah went to work “in front of his house.”

Guys, the first place to start serving the Lord is in your own household. Howard Hendricks use to say, “If your Christianity doesn’t work at home don’t export it.”

Verse 12 “And next to him was Shallum the son of Hallohesh, leader of half the district of Jerusalem; he and his daughters made repairs.” Notice, Shallum got his kids involved with him serving the Lord. He and his daughters worked together.

Several years ago Discipleship Journal magazine ran an article, entitled, "Making Ministry a Family Affair". Here's an excerpt, "Busy schedules and the stresses of life... tend to pull family members apart. Serving Christ together in a ministry produces a strong bond that holds (family) members together."

Hey, the family that *serves together - stays together*. Find ways to serve the Lord alongside your spouse and kids, and it'll add meaning to your family life.

Skip down to verse 26, “Moreover the Nethinim who dwelt in Ophel made repairs as far as the place in front of the Water Gate toward the east...”

Remember, the Nethinim were servants of the Temple. They were water boys. They carried water. Thus, they lived near the Water Gate, and worked on the wall.

I understand that Rabbi Nixon supervised the work near the Water Gate.

Verse 27 “After them the Tekoites repaired another section, next to the great projecting tower, and as far as the wall of Ophel.” Remember the men of Tekoa – minus their elders – rebuilt a portion of the wall near the Fish Gate (verse 5).

Here they pull double duty. They finished early and tackled another section.

Verse 32, “**And between the upper room at the corner, as far as the Sheep Gate, the goldsmiths and the merchants made repairs.**” He’s back where he started. He began at the *Sheep Gate* and went west – counter-clockwise...

Verse 3, the *Fish Gate* – verse 6, the *Old Gate* – verse 13, the *Valley Gate*, and *Refuse Gate* – verse 15, the *Fountain Gate* - verse 26, the *Water Gate* – verse 28, the *Horse Gate* – verse 29, the *East Gate* – verse 31, the “**Miphkad**” Gate, or the *Inspection Gate*... And the question arises “**why this order?**”

Remember, there’re no accidents with the Holy Spirit.

In Hebrews 10:7 Jesus said, “**In the volume of the book it is written of Me...**” Look on any page in Scripture and you’ll find Jesus... including Nehemiah 3.

The Christian life starts at the **Sheep Gate** – embracing Jesus as our sacrifice.

Next is the **Fish Gate** where we become fishers of men.

At the **Old Gate** we learn the unchangeable truths of the Bible.

At times we’re by the **Valley Gate** and need encouragement.

Invariably, we end up at the **Refuse Gate** where we have to toss out some garbage from our lives.

That’s when we find the Holy Spirit’s refreshment at the **Fountain Gate**.

And are cleansed by the Word at the **Water Gate**,
And find strength at the **Horse Gate**.

The journey continues until Jesus returns.

When He does, He sets His foot down on the Mount of Olives and enters the **Eastern Gate** where He judges the nations - the **Inspection Gate**.

Embedded in Nehemiah 3 you find a *wall-to-wall* account of the whole Bible.

But here's the take home lesson from chapter 3...

God is building strong walls at Calvary Chapel and each one of us has a place in that work. If the wall is 95% complete - but there's one small crack – then we're all vulnerable - wild beasts, or foreign invaders, can get in and wreak havoc.

Without each of us there's a gap that endangers the rest of us.

Let me close with a great quote that makes my point...

“Even though my keyboard is an old model, it works very well except for one key. You'd think with all the other keys functioning properly, one key not working would not be noticed, but just one key out of whack seems to ruin the whole effort.

You may say, “Well, I'm only one person no one will even notice if I don't quite do my best.” But it does make a difference because to be effective a church needs active participation by everyone to the best of his or her ability. So the next time you think you're not important, remember my keyboard. You are a key person!”

“Xvxn though my kxyboard is an old modxl, it works vxry

wxll xxcxpt for one kxy. You'd think with all thx othxr kxys functioning propxrlly, one kxy not working would not bx noticxd, but just onx kxy out of whack sxxms to ruin thx whole xffort.

You may say, "Wxll, I'm only onx pxrson no onx will vxrn noticx if I don't quitx do my bxst." But it doxs makx a diffxrxncx bxcausx to bx xffxctivx a church nxxds activx participation by vxryonx to the bxst of his or hxr ability. So thx nxxt time you think you'rx not important, rxmxmbxr my kxyboard. You are a kxy person!"