

Life Inside the Walls

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By the Book™ A Chapter by Chapter Bible Study Series from **Jerry Vines Ministries**
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Let's Begin

In the building industry the term “beneficial occupancy” is used to refer to when the project is completed and it is time to move in. We might say that is what we have in Nehemiah 7. In a miraculous manner, the wall of Jerusalem has been completed in only 52 days. It is now time for the children of Israel to move into the city.

As we look at the opening verses, we again see Nehemiah's tremendous organizational skills. Everything he does to prepare for life inside Jerusalem is done in an orderly and systematic way. His skills remind us that God is a God of order. And as His children, He tells us

to do all things decently and in order (1 Cor. 14:40). This is especially important in doing the Lord's work. Too many times churches are content with doing God's work haphazardly. Instead, every church should strive to be well-organized as it represents the Lord Jesus Christ. Using the outline below, let's look at Nehemiah's leadership as it teaches us lessons on working and living for the Lord.

I. The Guarding of the People (vv. 1-3)

II. The Gathering of the People (vv. 4-69)

III. The Giving of the People (vv. 70-73)

I. The Guarding of the People (vv. 1-3)

After the wall and doors are completed, Nehemiah's first action is to appoint the porters, singers, and Levites (v. 1). The porters were the gatekeepers. They had the authority to allow people into the city and to forbid entry to others. We could say they represented the power of the city. Because we are God's born-again children, the Bible tells us the Spirit of God indwells us (Rom. 8:9). It also says we are kept by the power of God (1 Pet. 1:5). By ourselves, we don't have the strength to resist temptation or sin when it seeks to come into our lives. But because we are kept by the power of God and

His Holy Spirit lives within us, we have God's power in our lives. This means we have the power not to allow sin's entrance into our lives.

Nehemiah also appoints singers to help guard the city. Throughout the book of Nehemiah we can see the prominent role that singing and thanksgiving played in the lives of the Jews. There are about 18 references to singing and eight references to thanksgiving in Nehemiah. This is a contrast to when the children of Israel were in captivity. Psalm 137 tells us what it was like. Their captors

mockingly told them to sing a song of Zion (Ps. 137:3). Their response was, “How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?” (Ps. 137:4). One of the first ways we know something is wrong in our relationship with the Lord is when we lose our joy or song in the Lord. This can easily happen if we let sin into our lives. We are protected and guarded by the praise of God. A good way to judge whether we should let something in our life or not is to ask ourselves, “Will this bring praise to God? Will this create singing in my heart to the Lord?” The Bible tells us that whatever we do we should



do heartily as to the Lord (Col. 3:23).

The Levites were the third group Nehemiah appoints. We are told about their responsibility in Nehemiah 8:9, "... the Levites that taught the people ..." They were the Bible teachers in their day. It was their responsibility to set forth the principles of God's Word to guide the Jews in their daily behavior.

Let's take a few minutes to spiritualize what the Levites did. Our lives, as Christians, can be protected from sin if we will guard our lives with the principles of God's Word. In the pages of the Bible we not only find out how to be saved, but we also find out how to live our lives after we are saved. In fact, the Bible is filled with principles for daily living. It's interesting to follow the statements that are specifically given to us as being the will of God for us. One is, "In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" (1 Thess. 5:18). God wants His children to be thankful on a daily basis. Another one is found in 1 Thessalonians 4:3, "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication." We don't have to wonder whether or not we should keep ourselves sexually pure. The Bible specifically says to do so. There are other matters that are not specifically stated in the Bible. What do we do then? We go to the principles found in God's Word and examine that behavior

or activity to see if it is consistent with the principles God has given us.

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Nehemiah takes the steps for the people to be guarded, he next selects the leadership for the city (v. 2). He selects his brother, Hanani, and another man named Hananiah to be the administrators of Jerusalem. We first met Hanani in chapter 1. He was the one who told Nehemiah about the condition of Jerusalem when Nehemiah was still Artaxerxes' cup bearer in Babylon (1:2). No doubt, both Hanani and Hananiah had administrative skills or Nehemiah would not have given them their positions. Nehemiah does give us additional information about Hananiah, "... for he was a faithful man, and feared God above many" (v. 2b).

One of the most important requirements in doing the work of God is faithfulness. The Scripture tells us, "Moreover it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful" (1 Cor. 4:2). Every Christian can be and should be faithful. Even if we are not the

most gifted person in the world, we can be faithful. We may not be the most popular person either, but we can be faithful. The Bible puts a premium on dependability. The Lord Jesus Himself is known in the book of the Revelation as the faithful Witness (Rev. 1:4). We know we can count on Him. He is totally, absolutely trustworthy. The least we can render in response to His love and faithfulness is our faithfulness. We need to ask ourselves if we are being faithful to Him and the assignment He has given us. If not, why not?

Hananiah also "feared God above many." When we fear God, then we do not need to fear people or circumstances. The fear of God vanishes all other fears. It was said of John Knox, the great leader in Christian history from the 1500s, that he feared God so much that he never feared the face of any man.

Nehemiah gives Hanani and Hananiah instructions on guarding Jerusalem in verse 3. The gates were not to be opened until the sun was hot, and they were to be closed while the guards were still on duty. Normally the city gates were opened at sunrise, but Nehemiah didn't want the gates opened until there was plenty of daylight. That way the guards and doorkeepers could easily tell who was coming in or going out of the city. By closing the gates while the guards were still on duty, Nehemiah knew they would have a strong defense



present in case their enemies tried to attack or enter the city. He understood the need of being vigilant even with the city wall completed.

Last of all Nehemiah had Hanani and Hananiah “appoint watches of the inhabitants of Jerusalem” (v. 3b). Those who lived in the city were responsible for helping

guard the city. Some had regular posts, and everyone guarded his own home.

Reflection Connection

Discuss ways believers can guard their lives today from sin and the attacks of the devil.

II. The Gathering of the People (vv. 4-69)

After having Jerusalem’s security and leadership in place, Nehemiah turns his attention to the people. Jerusalem was a large city, but it had very few people and actual houses in it (v. 4). So, he takes the steps to correct this problem. He is careful to give God the credit for his plan by telling us, “And my God put into mine heart to gather the nobles, and the rulers, and the people ...” (v. 5). He gathers all the citizens together in order to register them. He also adds that he found a record of those who had returned years earlier when Zerubbabel led the first group back to Jerusalem from Babylon (cp. Ezra 2).

Starting with verse 7 and continuing through verse 69, we read about everyone who returned years earlier with Zerubbabel. It is virtually a duplication of the list we find in Ezra 2. Why was Nehemiah interested in these people? They returned way before he did. Nehemiah

takes the time to list their names and to tell about them again because he understood the importance of paying tribute to the past.

We don’t want to live in the past, but faithful believers from our past ought to inspire us to be the same kind of believers in our generation. We are building for

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the future. We are establishing role models for those who will follow us in the days ahead. We need to be faithful and live in such a way that those who come after us will remember us as meaning business for our Lord Jesus Christ. Any church is only one generation away from apostasy. It takes a generation by

generation commitment to Jesus and to His precious Word. So, Nehemiah is taking time to show his appreciation to the past.

We can also notice several things about the gathering of the people. First, we see the importance of numbers. As we read through the list, specific numbers are given. In fact, if we put all the numbers together, we would see there are about 50,000-plus people listed. Don’t ever minimize the importance of numbers. God is interested in numbers because numbers represent people, and people are important to God.

Every church needs to realize it is in the people business. When we forget that, we will go out of business. Some people think that if God is going to save the lost, He’ll just save them. They think we have no involvement. They don’t seem to understand that in the plan of God’s elected grace, He chooses the preaching of the Gospel to call out the redeemed.



Many churches are dying and closing up. It is because they got out of the people business. They stopped going out and telling people about Jesus. They stopped inviting people to Sunday School and church.

Another truth we can glean as we read the names in this chapter is that we are not just a number, but we are also a name. Jesus said, "My sheep hear my voice, and

I know them by name, and they follow me" (John 10:27).

As we read through the names, we see there was a group of priests who were not "reckoned" or included in the genealogy (vv. 63-65). Their names could not be found in the record book. Because of this, they were "polluted" from the priesthood. They were not allowed to live as priests until it could be proven

they were truly priests. This is a reminder that it is so important to be sure of our salvation and to know our name is written in the Lamb's book of life (cp. Rev. 20:11-15).

Reflection Connection

According to Luke 10:20, what is the reason a believer has for rejoicing?

III. The Giving of the People (vv. 70-73)

As Nehemiah concludes the list of everyone who first returned to Jerusalem, he focuses on their giving. Four times in three verses we read the word "gave" (vv. 70-72). First, we read the "chief" or leaders gave. They set the example for giving. Then the rest of the people followed (v. 72). A question we need to ask ourselves is what kind of example are we being to others in our giving? When children see parents who honor the Lord in their giving, they will want to follow their parents' example. When younger Christians see older Christians who are generous and cheerful givers to the Lord and His work, they likewise are able to learn the blessing of giving.

Second Corinthians 8 shares several universal principles that can help us better understand our giving to the Lord. In this chapter Paul tells the Corinthian Christians about the Macedonian

Christians' giving as he encourages the Corinthians in their giving. The first principle is equality. Paul shares, "For I mean not

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that other men be eased, and ye burdened: But by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want; that there may be equality" (2 Cor. 8:13-14). Every believer's giving begins

with the principle of equality, which is the tithe. Some believers are blessed more financially than others, but the tithe puts us all on an equal basis.

The second principle we see is liberality. Regarding the Macedonian believers, Paul shared, "How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality" (2 Cor. 8:2). The Macedonians were having a hard time. They were actually poor. Yet, they characterized their giving by the principle of liberality. Too many times, people think only the wealthy can be liberal in their giving. But it is not prosperity that makes a person a liberal giver. In fact, prosperity can do just the opposite. Liberality is not a matter of how much money a person has. Liberality is a matter of how much love we have in our heart for Jesus and His church.



We are living today in what is known as a consumer society. People are consumer oriented. We want and get the best product at the best terms. If we aren't careful that same spirit can invade our Christian life and thinking. We can get the attitude that our church exists to serve us. When we do this, we can begin to look at our church like a mall. If we find a better deal down the road, we will just move on down to that church. God doesn't want us to have that kind of attitude.

When it comes to the Lord's work and His church, we should never say, "What can the church do for me" or "What am I going to get out of it?" Instead, we should say, "What can I do for my Lord through my church?" and "What can I give to the Lord's work in and through my church?"

Sincerity is the third principle that we find in 2 Corinthians 8. Verse 8 says, "I speak not by commandment, but by occasion

of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love." When we truly love, we cannot help but give. This is because love always gives. The supreme example is when God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.

Reflection Connection

Read 2 Corinthians 9:7 and discuss ways believers can be cheerful givers today.

Wrap Up

Chapter 7 concludes with telling us how everyone went to his own city (v. 53). With the wall of Jerusalem completed, the children of Israel were ready to begin a new norm in their lives. They had accomplished so much in so little time—all because of the good hand of God upon Nehemiah and Nehemiah's godly leadership. God may not have put us in a place of leadership like He did Nehemiah, but we can all follow Nehemiah's example. Let's strive to be men and women who rely on the Lord, honor Him in all we do, and do all things decently and in order.

