

NEHEMIAH

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Nehemiah chapter 4 as we continue our study through the Word of God. Now as we move into Nehemiah chapter 4, we have seen that Nehemiah, who was the cupbearer to King Artaxerxes, returns from Persia to Jerusalem to repair the walls of the city. And the task was enormous. The walls were broken down and burned. The city was defenseless. And yet Nehemiah had a burden for the work and as he looked at these broken down walls, he developed a vision for the work that needed to be done.

And as Nehemiah prayed about it, saw the work, he brought what the Lord put upon his heart to the people and he told the people his vision. Then he assigned families to work on the sections of the wall next to their own homes.

But the enemy is also watching what is going on and when Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem hear about it they begin to laugh at them. They are coming against the work of God trying to get them to stop! They say, “**. . . ‘What is this thing that you are doing? Will you rebel against the king?’**” Nehemiah 2:19. That can be discouraging as you are trying to work and people are laughing at what you are doing!

And for us, it is easy to become discouraged and stop the work. We tend to focus on the enemy and what they are saying instead of the Lord. But Nehemiah does not focus on the enemy. He remains focused on the Lord and the work that God has called him to do. And his response to their ridicule of the work was simple. We are told in Nehemiah 2:20, **“So 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.’”**

We need to keep that in mind, to stay focused on the Lord and not let the enemy distract us from the work that God has for us. Remember what the Psalmist wrote in Psalm 127:1, **“Unless the LORD builds the house, They labor in vain who build it; Unless the LORD guards the city, The watchman stays awake in vain.”** How true that is, may we not forget that!

Now it sounds so simple and I guess it is but it does take faith in the Lord and what He has said. Nehemiah trusted in God that the work would be accomplished. And since the good hand of God was upon him, the work would be completed because God was going to prosper them in this project. Because of that, no matter what the enemy would do, they would not be successful in stopping the work. As Paul said in Romans 8:31, “. . . **If God is for us, who can be against us?**” In other words, no one can be against us and that is the perspective we should have not only in ministry, but in life!

Now don't think for a minute that the enemy is going to roll over and play dead. They are not going to stop their assault against the work that is being done. As we move into Nehemiah chapter 4 this evening we will see the enemy attack through ridicule or mockery. They will attack through threatening them. And they will attack by trying to discourage them.

With that as our background, let's see how Nehemiah and the children of Israel respond to these attacks and how we can apply these lessons to our lives. So let's begin reading in Nehemiah chapter 4, starting in verse 1 and see what the Lord has for us as we study through His Word.

NEHEMIAH 4

VERSES 1-2

1. Now we see Sanballat start out and what he says was not altogether a lie. Yes he was trying to discourage them from completing the work by mocking them, but it was true that the walls were in ruins and the work to rebuild them was overwhelming. It was true that they were feeble and they could not complete the work in a day. In fact, when he says, **“Will they offer sacrifices”** the idea here is that through these sacrifices is God going to build this wall for them? Again, just mocking them and the work they were doing! Because of all the work that was before them, the enemy takes advantage of the opportunity and tries to discourage them through ridicule and mockery. Interestingly enough, the name “Sanballat” means “thorn in secret” and he truly was a thorn in the flesh of the Jews!

2. But Sanballat is not alone in this effort to stop the work. Let's read on and see what Tobiah has to say.

VERSE 3

1. As this ridicule continues, Tobiah steps in and he mocks them even more. He basically is saying that the light-footed fox would not even be able to stand on the wall that these feeble Jews are building. That wall would just collapse and thus, it will not protect them! This is a very effective weapon that the enemy uses and many times the work of God stops because of this opposition. You see, the work is overwhelming and we can't do it on our own. We must understand that God never asks us to do it on our own. Paul said in Philippians 4:13, "**I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.**" Don't become discouraged in the work, look to the one who will strengthen you to do the work!

2. Now in saying that, I am sure we have all been there where people have mocked the work we are doing for the Lord. But let's think this through. Nehemiah had papers from the King of Persia to do this work and these men had no authority to stop them from doing it! All these men could do is discourage them from completing the work!

The same is true in our lives. We have been set free by our King, Jesus Christ. And the enemy can't stop us from the work because the Lord has called us to it and through Him we can do all things. So what does the enemy do? He tries to discourage us by mocking us, telling us we are feeble and we can't do it and many times the work does stop because we listen to the enemy instead of the King! May we learn to walk by faith and trust in the Lord and continue doing the work He has called us to do no matter what the enemy is saying or doing because we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us!

3. Now let's continue reading to see how Nehemiah is going to deal with this mocking of the work they are doing.

VERSES 4-5

1. If we found ourselves in a situation like this, what would we do? Would we confront the enemy? Maybe we would form a committee to figure out how to deal with this enemy? Maybe we would protest what the enemy is doing, have all kinds of posters, "Down with Sanballat and Tobiah" and-so-on? Maybe we would take the case to court. I hate to say it but that is what we do many times but it is not what Nehemiah did.

You see, Nehemiah did not waste any time by confronting the enemy. What Nehemiah did is he brought his requests before God. He asks God to turn the tables on the enemy and do to them what they wanted to do to us. Cast them into hell and don't forgive them their sin. Sounds much like King David who called for his enemies to be bashed in the face and their teeth knocked out and-so-on.

2. Now as we read that many have a hard time with it because in the New Testament, Jesus calls us to love our enemies, not to destroy them. Jesus said in Matthew 5:44, **“But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you.”**

And so, is what Nehemiah doing wrong? Is what he is praying for wrong? I don't think it is wrong to pray for God to stop the evil that is going on. I don't think it is wrong to pray that God would turn the tables on those that are coming against God's people. We are not asking for revenge but that God would thwart the plans of the enemy so the work of God can be accomplished!

3. Now as this prayer is prayed, what happened? Let's read on and see.

VERSE 6

1. Please understand that this did not necessarily stop the enemy from their mocking. What it did was get the people focused back on God and thus the work was able to move forward. It is as one writer put it, “Critics demoralize. Leaders encourage. When the critics spoke, the workmen heard them and were demoralized. But when the capable leader stepped up and said, ‘Let's look at it God's way, stay at the job,’ the crew members were back in there.” (Swindoll). And again, this prayer had no immediate affect on the enemy, they were still mocking. The difference came in the hearts of the people!

2. Now, in a short period of time they were able to enclose the wall of the city and complete half the height of the wall. How did they accomplish this so quickly? They accomplished this by working together, having the same focus. Remember what Peter said in I Peter 3:8, **“Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous.”**

The idea is to have the mind of Christ in doing the work of God. When you do, the focus will not be to exalt self, but to do the work of God for the glory of God. It is amazing the work that can be done when brethren work together in unity. It is also amazing the work that isn't done when there is disunity. In one church they almost had a church split over what color the church basement was to be painted. One group thought blue, for it is the color of heaven. The other group wanted green for it spoke of growth. If you can't come in unity on something as simple as that, how in the world are you going to work together to reach the lost, to build up the kingdom of God? You will not be able to!

3. And once again, don't think this will just stop the enemy. He will come up with other ways to stop the work as we will see here as we read on!

VERSES 7-8

1. Here we see a group of people that normally did not get along, join forces to stop the work of God. You see, if the enemy can't stop the work through ridicule, they then will come and attack you from different sides, to weaken, to discourage you until the work stops. The enemy hears that the walls are going up quickly so they mobilize more men to attack the Jews; they were now going to assault them. Now they never really went through with this threat, but they came forward to confuse the people, to discourage them from doing the work.

2. Why are we confused in our lives as Christians? Because we are listening to the enemy instead of the Lord! We are focused on what the enemy is saying instead of the promises of God! Remember what we are told in Isaiah 26:3, "**You will keep him in perfect peace, Whose mind is stayed on You, Because he trusts in You.**" May we keep our eyes, our mind on the Lord instead of letting the enemy confuse us with his threats!

3. Now what is Nehemiah going to do? Let's read on and see!

VERSE 9

1. Nehemiah was consistent; he brought this threat to the Lord just as he did when the enemy was mocking them. And what we see them do here is an important lesson for us to learn. As I have said, the first thing that Nehemiah did was he brought his request before God, and that is exactly what we need to do. The problem for many is that is where they begin and then they just stop there. They will leave it in God's hands, which sounds correct but don't forget that God does want us to do our part. Nehemiah not only prayed about the situation, but then he set watches, night and day, to oversee the situation and watch for any enemy attacks. He left it in the hands of God and then they went to work trusting that God would see them through these threats!

2. Now I have seen this played out over the years as I have asked people to help in an area of need within the church, and they will say, "Let me pray about it." And again, that sounds great, it sounds spiritual but that is the last time you will hear from them. What they are really saying is, "NO way! I don't want to do that but I don't want to sound like I don't want to help, so I will pray about it!" But using spiritual jargon to get out of the situation is not right. Just give an honest yes or no, if you will help or you won't help. When you go looking for a job, you pray about it and then you send out your resumes and hit the streets looking for a job. God is not going to drop a job down on your lap. He will do His part, but He also wants you to do your part, just as Nehemiah did.

When we pray that God would bring people into His kingdom we don't just sit around waiting for God to do it, we go out into the highways and byways and compel people to come into the kingdom of God. We give it to the Lord in prayer and then we step out in faith and do our part!

3. We have seen the threats that have come from outside but now we are going to see another threat, this time coming from within and that threat will be discouragement!

VERSE 10

1. The wall is half finished, the mocking and the threats continue and now we see some of the people became discouraged in the work. And it was not just a few; it was the tribe of Judah. They looked at all the work that still needed to be done, the removal of all the rubbish that had been accumulating for over a hundred years. They listened to the threats of the enemy, all this pressure and the tribe that was known as praise became a tribe known as discouragement to the people as they focused their eyes upon the work, they focused their eyes upon the enemy, instead of God who called them to do the work.

Folk's, many times this is where the enemy gets us. The work is half done but God never calls us to just start strong, He wants us to finish strong. And don't you think that the God who has called you is more than able to see you through till the end? Of course He is!

2. Many times people get into ministry and they are pumped up about it. They are going gang busters, doing the work that God has called them to do. But as the novelty wears off, the work begins to be overwhelming and they become discouraged in it. God is telling us to be faithful in the work, not to give up. Yes the work is hard, but it is also rewarding. Paul said in Galatians 6:9-10, “**And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.**” Folk’s, our labor is never in vain in the Lord and that is the key, *IN THE LORD!*

VERSES 11-12

1. Have you ever felt that the enemy is getting at you from every side? That is what we see here. The tribe of Judah was discouraged and that discouragement was caught by those around them, like a flu bug. They dragged everyone down with them into their despair. And now the enemy is going to seize this opportunity to jump in and attack them. You see, when praise is gone, when we have lost that fellowship with God, the enemy is more than willing to come in and kill us, destroy us, bring us down. Here we see that word had spread that it doesn’t matter where you go; the enemy is going to strike you. What was the problem here? Their eyes were on the enemy, brought down by the discouragement of Judah and now they are seeing themselves in a hopeless situation! They were telling everyone that the enemy is going to sneak up and attack us no matter what we do or where we turn!

2. In the church you will always find people that will drag others down with them. When Warren Wiersbee was the pastor at Moody Bible Church in Chicago, he had two men that came up to him before every service. One would say, “Bad news pastor, the church is half empty!” The other would come in and say, “Great news pastor, the church is already half full!” You see, it was the same church, it was the same situation but they had different perspectives on the situation! One was discouraging and the other encouraging. I would rather be around people that are encouraging than discouraging, especially in the work of God. The enemy has enough help, let’s not join in and help him anymore! Let’s keep our eyes focused on the Lord and rest in His promises instead of the lies of the Devil!

3. What is Nehemiah going to do in response to these threats? Let’s read on and see.

VERSES 13-14

1. Now why in the world did Nehemiah not pray about this? He already did and now it was time to act. And we see Nehemiah’s response to this situation is to place men by the wall, ready to defend against the enemy. He then tells them to get their eyes off the enemy, which causes fear, and place it back on the Lord and trust Him by faith that He will deliver us. Notice the rallying cry, “**Remember the Lord**” and Nehemiah reminds them of the power and strength of God who is going to fight for them, who will see them through. J. Vernon McGee wrote this in regards to this rallying cry and he concludes with some thoughts of how we can apply this to our lives, what our rallying cry should be! He wrote,

“Remember the Lord” was to be their motto, their rallying cry. As you may remember in the Spanish–American War, our nation’s battle cry was “Remember the Maine.” In World War I it was “Remember the Lusitania.” In World War II it was “Remember Pearl Harbor.” Napoleon always reminded his soldiers of some past history to stir them up to fight. When Paul the apostle wrote his swan song to a young preacher named Timothy, he gave him a rallying cry. The correct translation of 2 Timothy 2:8 is, “Remember Jesus Christ!” That is the rallying cry of believers today. “Remember the Lord” was the rallying cry for the Jews in Nehemiah’s day.

J. Vernon McGee, Thru The Bible Vol. II, p. 520

May we not forget that! You see, fear and faith are mutually exclusive. If you fear the enemy you are not trusting in the Lord. Nehemiah tells them to get the right perspective and then fight for your families, don’t give up. In I Peter 3:12 we read, **“For the eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, And His ears are open to their prayers; But the face of the LORD is against those who do evil.”**

2. Before we move on I want to expound on what is said here in verse 14, **“... ‘Do not be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, great and awesome, and fight for your brethren, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your houses.’”** I know, some of you are thinking, “Pastor Joe, aren’t you going overboard here? We are not in a battle. There are no walls to build up. There is no rubbish to be removed. So what does this have to do with us?”

Are you living in a bubble? We are in a battle for our families. In the school system they are teaching them evolution, sexual perversion and promiscuity and-so-on. On the television they are indoctrinating them with their immorality. The walls of protection need to be built back up. The garbage we have in our homes, in our lives needs to be removed. You need to fight for your family. School is starting once again. The new television season is starting and-so-on. If you care for your family you will be fighting for them as the world tries to destroy them and Jesus wants to heal them, give them that abundant life that is only found in Him.

I think that is some of the problems we see today in families, that we are not fighting for them. We are more interested in what we want than what God wants. I pray that we will fight for our families, build up those walls of protection and remove the garbage that has crept into our homes! Nehemiah called for them to get their swords and spears and bows and I think it is time for us to get serious in this battle and put on the full armor of God and fight with all the resources that God has given to us.

As Paul said, **“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.”** Ephesians 6:10-13. May we take that stand and fight for our families!

VERSE 15

1. As the enemy finds out that the Jews know of their plans, and how they are not afraid any longer, that God is fighting for them, the enemy backs off. It is as Psalm 42:5 says, **“Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him For the help of His countenance.”** Keep the right perspective and God will give you peace of heart. The work was restarted and once again the enemy has failed.

2. Now let me ask you this. What was the victory here? Was it that the enemy was held back, didn't attack them? I don't think so even though that was great and there is victory in that, but that is not where it ends. I think the real victory or the complete victory was the work was continuing on. Folk's think about that for a minute. We tend to think that the victory is enduring the storm, which is important, but if we negate what the enemy was trying to stop us from doing, he still wins. Think of it like this. A ship is in a violent storm and the captain is working hard to keep the ship from sinking. And after several days of working to keep the ship afloat, the storm breaks and the sea is calm. Does the captain now let the ship just float wherever it wants to go? No, it must get to the destination, the work must be completed. Yes it was important to go through the storm, but if the work is not completed, then that victory through the storm is meaningless. I hope you see that! As we go through the storms of life, the attacks of the enemy, we must complete the work that God has called us to do and the enemy tried to stop us from finishing!

VERSES 16-18

1. Now Nehemiah has them working with a trowel in one hand and a sword in another.

And along the wall was a man who would sound the trumpet to alert the people of an enemy attack. It is just as Daniel said would happen, as he was in captivity in Babylon some 100 years before this event. Daniel was told by the angel Gabriel that, “**... The street shall be built again, and the wall, Even in troublesome times.**” Daniel 9:27.

2. Now how in the world does that apply to our Christian life? We too should have our sword in one hand, the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, for protection from the enemy. Paul tells us in Ephesians chapter 6 that the Word of God is the sword of the Spirit. And in Hebrews 4:12 we are told, “**For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.**” And in II Timothy 2:15 Paul tells us to, “**Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.**” It is part of the armor of God, our spiritual weapon and we need to know how to use it, it should become a natural extension of our life. When we speak we should speak forth the Words of God instead of the wisdom of man. When the enemy comes against us, it is an offensive weapon to stop him. May we take up the sword of the Spirit!

And also we should have a trowel in the other hand, that is doing the work that God has called us to do. And we do we wait for the trumpet of God to call us home, but until that time, don't become discouraged in the work, but complete the work that God has called you to do, prepared for any encounter and do it with joy in your heart. As Paul said in Colossians 3:17, "**And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.**"

VERSES 19-23

1. These guys were working from sun up till sun down, and they even slept in their clothes. Why did they do this? They did this because they were always in a state of readiness. They were always ready to go into battle at any time, whenever they heard the sound of the trumpet. As Christians, we must always be ready to go where God calls us to go, to be prepared for the work. We must always have on the armor of God. As Peter said in I Peter 3:15, "**But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.**"

2. I like what David Guzik wrote regarding this, "Christians need to be armed with the same attitude today. They need to be always ready, always clothed with the righteousness of Jesus Christ, always wearing the armor of God, ready for that final trumpet blast that will gather us together with our LORD." May we not forget that!

NEHEMIAH 5**VERSES 1-5**

1. We have seen that when the attacks were out in the open, they were recognized and dealt with. But now the attacks were not coming from outside but inside. What did Israel do that was so bad? There was a food shortage, partly due to the influx of people, and partly due to the people focusing their attention on the work and not tending to their crops. And this led to a food shortage in the land. And when there is a problem, there are always those who are looking to make a profit off it and that is what we are seeing here. The people, just to buy food they had to mortgage their lands, they borrowed money to pay the taxes and even sold their children into slavery to help pay their debts. Those that lent them the money were charging high interests rates, making a profit off the people. And because of this, there was a great discouragement in Israel. The rich were getting richer and the poor were getting poorer and the people could not afford to buy food any longer!
2. We have seen how Nehemiah has dealt with previous issues, how will he handle this one? Let's read on and see.

VERSES 6-7

1. How could Nehemiah do this? How could he be angry at what was going on? That does not sound like a man of God but a man of the flesh. Please understand that it says, **“After serious thought”** he then rebuked them. Most of us would rush in anger and deal with this situation. Nehemiah mediated on what should be done as he took God’s Word and applied it to his actions. He then rebukes them accordingly. Why? Because they were transgressing the Word of God by what they were doing to the poor!

Back in Exodus 22:25 God said that if a person loaned money to a fellow Jew, they were not to charge them interest, which they were doing. You will also see this spoken of in Deuteronomy 23:19-20.

Also, according to Deuteronomy 15:7-8 we are told that if there was a brother who was poor you were to open your hand to him and help him out. This they did not do.

They were not to be sold as slaves but be hired servants according to Leviticus 25:39-40. This again they did not do.

They were not to make a profit off fellow Jews misfortunes, according to Leviticus 25:35-37. And the wealthy were making a profit off the poor. You see, Nehemiah did not rebuke them because he **FELT** it was the right thing to do. He rebuked them for transgressing the Word of God, which tells me that Nehemiah knew the Word of God!

2. We must be careful that we do not respond in anger in the situations we find ourselves in. But bring it to the Lord, let the Word of God instruct us and then confront the issue in love. If there needs to be a rebuke, then do it in love. Nehemiah was not afraid to offend the wealthy; he just did what was right because of the injustice that was occurring towards the poor, his fellow Jews!

VERSES 8-11

1. Nehemiah is reminding them of what happened in their past, that some of the Jews were sold in Babylon and when the Jews returned from Babylon, they bought their brethren out of slavery. Now they are doing what the enemy did, placing their own brethren into slavery. And as Nehemiah confronted them over this issue, they were silenced. They knew they were doing wrong. I like that. They made no excuses for what they did. And Nehemiah tells the people to restore back what they have taken from the poor, even the annual interest they were collecting from them. And Nehemiah will help those in need by giving them money and grain without interest.

2. In regards to what Nehemiah did, listen to what J. Vernon McGee wrote regarding our actions when things are wrong. He wrote,

We ought to be stirred up to a righteous anger when we see something wrong in the church. We should not mollycoddle the wrongdoer and shut our eyes to his sin. Many people say, “We just don’t want to disturb things.” You don’t? My friend, you had better do something because the Devil has moved in on you, and he will divide you. We need courage today. We need conviction. The church no longer has a good name in the world, and the world is passing it by. The spiritual movement that is emerging is largely outside the organized church. Christians have been playing church. The controlling group in the church has been having a good time, but they are not reaching the lost, and the world is passing by uninterested.

A preacher in the North said to me, “It makes me angry to think that you cannot reach out and touch the lost today because they know about the hypocrisy, the pious platitudes, and the dishonesty inside the church.” But there are those in the world who are longing to know the truth. They want to know if we are being honest in what we have to say. Some of the brethren deal with wrongs in the church by sweeping them under the rug with the excuse that they want to maintain a “Christian” attitude by being sweet and nice. That’s not acting like a Christian - it is acting like a *coward!*

- J. Vernon McGee, Thru The Bible Vol. II, p. 523

3. As Christians, our conduct, the way we do business, should be above reproach. It should glorify God and not bring disgrace to His Name. Paul put it this way in Philippians 1:27-28 when he said, **“Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel, and not in any way terrified by your adversaries, which is to them a proof of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that from God.”** Paul is saying that our conduct, the way we live, should be according to the high calling by which we have been called. You should work together with the brethren for the cause of Christ, for the kingdom of God. Even your business dealings should be above reproach. It may cost you money, but if you promised to do something at such and such a cost, then do it. You are serving the Lord and representing Him in all that you do!

VERSES 12-13

1. Nehemiah spoke the truth in love, he rebuked them for their sin and they received the rebuke and are going to do the right thing! How often we come to brothers and sisters in the Lord and confront their sin and they reject it, get angry, they do not have a teachable spirit. That is truly sad. And Nehemiah said if they just said these words and there was no action to what they said, there would be consequences, they would not get a way with it. I like this guy!

VERSES 14-16

1. I want you to notice the heart of Nehemiah here. You see, because of his position Nehemiah was allowed to receive free food, but he refused, not wanting to add further burdens to the people. Nehemiah was a leader by example. The leaders before him took advantage of the people and the free things they could get because of their position, but not Nehemiah. You see, he did not tell the people to do anything or go anywhere that he was not willing to do or go. He even continued to help with the building of the wall! That truly is the mark of a great leader.

2. Now why did the other governors take advantage of this and Nehemiah did not? Because he had the fear of God in his life which caused him to do things that were pleasing to God and the other governors did not. He was a servant. Those that don't have the fear of God tend to lord over the people and fleece the flock. They are hirelings, looking out for their own interests and not true shepherds.

3. One more point here. I want you to notice his approach to ministry; he came to do the work. He did not sit behind some desk telling the people what needed to be done. He was out doing the work. Some people get into ministry looking for the glamour and the excitement and when they find out the work is intense, they leave that ministry. And when they do, they are also leaving the many blessings that God had for them in that ministry as well as leaving the sheep that God has entrusted to them hurting!

VERSES 17-18

1. Nehemiah was in touch with the people. He knew their needs. He was not going to add to their burden by demanding those things that were rightfully his as governor. He sacrificed comfort for the sake of the people. That is a leader who has a servant's heart! It was not a job for Nehemiah, it was a calling! Before we get into any ministry, may we see it as a calling and not a job! In fact, whatever we do, may we see it as a calling and not a job! And may we do it with the fear of the Lord in our hearts, knowing we are serving Him!

VERSE 19

1. As Christians, there is nothing wrong with looking forward to the rewards. That is one of those blessings for faithful service. The key is that our heart is right in all that we do for the Lord. Let me close this evening with these words from J. Vernon McGee regarding this man, Nehemiah. He wrote,

He was a wonderful man. His concern was for his people, but they would forget him. It is a sad thing, but many a famous person has learned that the world forgets. People have short memories. But Nehemiah asked God to remember him. He said, "Think upon me, my God." How wonderful to know that, while God does not remember our sins, He will always remember our good works. And He even records them in a book!

- J. Vernon McGee, Thru The Bible Vol. II, p. 525

May we not look to man for our reward, but to the Lord! May we remember that we are servants of Christ and we don't deserve any reward for our work, but Christ will reward us for faithful service and when we go to be with Him, we will be able to lay those crowns back at His feet because He is the one who enabled us to do these things in the first place! What an awesome God we have and may we serve Him faithfully!