

Jack Murray, Nehemiah: Message 2

Transcribed by Kristen Terry, 2008 Gordon College

Bible Evangelism present once again: expository preaching by Dr. Jack Murray.

Designed to exalt the savior and bless you the listener. Here now is Dr. Jack Murray.

We're studying in these mornings the book Nehemiah, and I trust that you're reading Nehemiah over and over again because it's a very very important study. But I'll give you the outline of the book and then we can warm up to the new material today. Nehemiah is divided into four different sections. "Vision and Prayer" is the first division. Chapter 1 verses 1 through 11. And we covered this yesterday. The setting of the book, Nehemiah of course was a captive, a prominent captive, the cupbearer to the king, of Artaxerxes Longimanus, the great king of Persia. He was in Shushan the palace, or Susa the palace. There he received the report of the condition of Jerusalem and it broke his heart and he began to pray. His godly concern is expressed in verse 4 of chapter 1, and his prayer is expressed in verses 5-11. We gave you four words for the prayer, really a model of revival praying: "Calling upon God," "Confessing sin," "Claiming the promises of God," and "Committing oneself in an absolute abandonment to God's will." Now that's a very brief story of yesterday's beginning. We provided a great deal more background material. But in just five mornings we've got to exclude some things.

God's Delay

"Valiant for the truth and valiant in fight." These are the two names for the second

section that runs all the way from chapter 2 verse 1 through chapter 7 verse 73. Chapter 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7. And the first thing is chapter 2 is the evidence of the answered prayer that we found in the last few verses of chapter one. And under that answered prayer we're going to title this: "God's delay." The reason for it, look at it now, "It came to pass in the month Nison." You'll notice in verse one of chapter one, the month Chisleu or Chislev. These are two names of the Hebrew calendar. And it represents a gap of about four

months. So the prayer in chapter one of Nehemiah is really delayed. For four months we can see behind the scenes when Nehemiah as an individual and Nehemiah with his companions because there's evidence of the fact that others joined him in prayer, prayed very, very earnestly for God to do something in this situation that seemed utterly impossible. Here they were hundreds of miles removed from the thing they wanted touched. Here he was a captive and had no provision whatsoever to leave this valuable post as the king's cupbearer. But they prayed and they prayed and they kept on praying and God delayed that prayer for four long months.

And then something happened. The Bible tells us: "that one day when Nehemiah was administering his usual job; the wine was before the king: and I took it up the wine, and gave it unto the king. Now I had not been sad in his presence. Wherefore the king said unto me, why is thy countenance sad? Seeing thou art not sick, this is nothing else but sorrow of heart. Then I was very much afraid" (Neh. 2:1f). Perhaps a little bit of explanation here. The cupbearer to the king was a very remarkable individual. He was not simply a taster, nor a servant, nor a waiter. He was the most trusted man in the Persian court. Not only was he this, but he was also to be of a manner that would be pleasing to the king. You remember King Saul in the Old Testament when he became sour and depressed and disconsolate. They brought young David in to play his harp, the music, in order to lift up the spirits of King Saul. Well something of that is seen here, this man was in the presence of the king, in order to be a help to him. Now that's not a unknown quality. You know people that you just like to be with because they do

something for you. And also, it's the portion of many people that it's a drag to be with certain people who are depressed and disconsolate and take something out of you. And this king had been in the presence of Nehemiah and Nehemiah had been in the presence of the king so long that immediately the king recognized that something was bothering Nehemiah. He knew it wasn't physical sickness and he recognized it and he made it known. And the Bible says then was I what? "So afraid." Why? He was not supposed to be sad in the presence of the king. And caught in this kind of a situation he answered the truth.

But just before we get to that, the other day I listened to a message from a young preacher by the name of George William Murray, a missionary to Italy. And he was dealing with answered prayer. It was so good. He's been borrowing mine so long, I decided to borrow one of his. And George had four points, and they were real good points. His point was that God always always in one way or another answers prayer. And the way he answers that prayer is, first of all, either directly. Many of you have had wonderful direct answers to prayer. Now I'm not going to take the time because it's too obvious. The very fact that God answers prayer directly sometimes overnight sometimes in the most spectacular way in just the way you ask it, the direct answer to prayer. However, there are those prayers which are answered differently. Some years ago I prayed for some kind of a training area for Bible Evangelism Incorporated. I have a full blown graduate theological seminary today of over one hundred college graduates. Some of the most brilliant young men that I know from some 60 different colleges by the time we get them all together next week. I didn't know God was going to answer my prayer like that. It was very different than I had contemplated. But he answered it. And then prayer is delayed and we have that case here in Nehemiah. It was delayed four months. Your prayers are not always answered immediately. But don't interpret God's delays to be God's denials. That is not true. I heard of George Mueller who prayed for 62 years for the salvation of one man. That prayer's answer was delayed. And then there is the denial. Some people dispute this. But you know when Junior asks for the car and makes requests for the car. And father says No! That's an answer, very definitely. And sometimes God

answers prayer that way. He says no. Three times, Paul lifted his voice to the Lord for the removal of the thorn in the flesh. And God said three times, no. That prayer was answered. And so prayer can be direct, it can be different, it can be delayed, it can be denied. In our story today we're dealing with a prayer that was delayed.

God's little things

Let's move along now to chapter 2 and verse 2. After we find this, we find God's little things. May I emphasize this, in this day of ciphers, in this day of the big crowds

and all that we're talking about, and the population explosion, we're apt to forget God's little things. Now the case in point here is the look on a man's face. That's really a very little thing. Whether he's sad or whether he's happy. This was the key that turned the lock to answer the prayer, such a little thing as the expression on a man's face.

A few months ago at Tennessee Temple, Dr. Lee Robertson, our good friend called Eleanor and said to Eleanor we want you to come to Chattanooga. We want to feature you in a banquet of 1500 people. And we want you to play not only in all of the meetings on Friday, Saturday and Sunday, and also set up a grand piano in the dining room so you can play for all of the students and all of the guests, but we want you to be here. We want to honor you for writing a little chorus. And I can remember when we got the message and the chorus was "Behold He Comes." It's in your songbook. And Eleanor's reaction was, "but it's so simple." But it's God's one little thing, one of God's little things. Lee Robertson said that "Behold He Comes" has been the dominant theme of every musical group from Tennessee Temple in the last five or six years. God's little things.

I know of a boy who had some loaves and fishes. One lunch, one boy's lunch. But he put it at God's disposal and God's been enabling us to talk about it for 2,000 years, right? What if he hadn't given it to Christ? Just another boy's lunch. God's little things. Little is much when what? When God is in it.

I have a doctor friend, he's in glory now. He's buried in Bethlehem. Dr. Thomas Lamby, one of the greatest missionaries I've ever had the privilege of being with. He

told a story one night about being in a compound in Ethiopia. This was before Benito Mussolini came in and then Benito Mussolini was run out again. And he said there was a loud knocking on the compound door one night, and there was a group of Ethiopian soldiers there. The general had a very painful ear. The medical doctor, Dr. Lamby is a graduate of the medical school of University of Pittsburgh. He looked into the ear with his little light, and took his forceps and removed a little beetle. And it had become

infected and he treated it with medicine and dismissed them. It was a very simple thing for a doctor to do. But the next day he was summoned into the presence of Haile Selassie. Why? Because this was that Greek American doctor who had saved the life of one of his generals. Dr. Lamby knew better, but they said this superstitiously was a wood boring beetle and it would have killed the general. As a result, Dr. Tom Lamby became the head of all of Ethiopian Red Cross and built the first large medical hospital in the country of Ethiopia. And I've heard Dr. Lamby tell this story many times. And he says, "You know? If God can use a little beetle, he can use you." God doesn't need much; he just needs the expression on a man's face.

God's Gifts

It's a very interesting story, isn't it? Now here he's afraid, but he wasn't supposed to be that way. But sometimes God makes you answer your own prayers. Nehemiah didn't plan it this way. No, no, this is the way God made it work. And so what did he say, he told the truth. And he said "Let the king live forever. Why should not my countenance be sad when the city, the place of my father's sepulchers, lieth waste and its gates are consumed with fire?" Then the king said unto me, "For what does thou make request?" (Neh. 2:2-3). Imagine, the king saying "what do you want?" Now do you want to see one of the shortest prayers in scripture? Here it is, not even worded. So I prayed to the God of heaven. Now what do you think Nehemiah did? Do you think he said, "Oh boy you got me unprepared, I didn't expect anything like this. This must be a shock. Give me a few hours to think this over." No, no, the man who spends time on his knees praying

privately is the man who knows what to do when he is called upon to pray publically. I don't think Nehemiah even closed his eyes. I believe inside he said, "Oh Lord, help me now." Amen? I want to emphasize this.

You know, if Peter had said a prayer as long as some of our preachers pray, when he stepped out of the boat to walk to Jesus he'd have drowned. That's all there was to it. He cried out for help! And he got it, immediately. There's a time when there's a cry in

the heart, and here it is. "Help me." And then an amazing thing takes place. You'll see it in the notes here: God's gifts. This was God's time to begin moving the hearts of the king. You realize that your marvelous power as a Christian can reach up to the highest human individuals and turn that heart in just the way that God wants it turned. Proverbs says, "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord. He turneth it whither soever he willith" (Prov. 21:1). Amen?

What a wonderful power, in the answer to prayer. And here it is, right now. And the king is going to ask something. He said, "If it please the king, and if thy servant have found favour in thy sight, that thou would send me unto Judah, unto the city of my fathers' sepulchres, that I may build it." (Neh. 2:5) Now let's stop there a moment. The last point in the prayer of yesterday morning was a complete commitment, an utter abandonment to God's disposal. Now here's the proof of it. Nehemiah didn't look at the king and say, "You know, I think we probably could get some people to go back and do that job." What did he say? Everybody say it. "Send me." Now you have those words in the sixth chapter of Isaiah too. But there in the second chapter of Nehemiah, send me. His commitment was himself. He said that I may go. I want to be involved. I want to get right in the middle of it. I want to be sent.

Period of Time

Now we find the reason for the delay. May I remind you this morning that God's delays are never lost? May I remind you that you never, never wait upon God and it cost you anything? Every moment, every minute, every hour, every day, every week, every

year that God causes you to wait to get the answer to that prayer in delay is very, very valuable. By the same token, however, any delay that is man-made always costs you something. Proof? There's not a person in this room who is not saved. Here me, if you're sitting there and you're not saved today, to go on in your sin is costing you misery and heartache and lack of peace and lack of joy and a thousand other things. There's not a person here who wouldn't say, "I wish I could've been a Christian longer. I wish

somebody would have come to me and put me on a ranch at the age of 7, 8 or 9 and led me to Christ. I had to wait till I was 15. I missed a lot between my early childhood and the time that I was a 15 year old teenager. I wish I'd have been saved. Paul sounds that word in one of his epistles about one of his relatives. He says, "Who was in Christ before me?" (Rom. 16:7) That's a great note. Christian, if you know what to do in the will of God and you're not doing it, it's costing you something. Man's delays are always very, very costly, but not God's delays. Why? Because of these four months. This man was not only praying he was planning. He was getting ready for his answer to prayer. I'm going to prove it now by four great steps.

Permission to go / Provisions

He knew what to say when the king said what do you want. The first thing the king asked for was this, verse six, "And the king said unto me, the queen also sitting by him, for how long will thy journey be? And when wilt thou return? So it pleased the king to send me; and I set him a time" (Neh. 2:6). He didn't say to the king, "Oh I don't really know how long it's going to take. I never thought about it. You really got me by surprise." I'm going to prove to you, now you can study your Bibles this week and find out, you know what Nehemiah answered? Oh, I know it's not in verse six, but I know I'm right because Nehemiah's going to confirm it when I talk to him. Yes, he is. He's going to look into the face of the king and say twelve years. I want twelve years of time sir. And the king says you got it. What else? "Moreover I said unto the king, if it please the king, let letters be given me to the governors beyond the river, that we may pass through till I

come to Jerusalem” (Neh. 2:7). King, I can’t get through unless you give me clearance. I’ve got to have a passport. I’ve got to have a visa. I’ve got to have permissions. I’ve got to have protocol. All of this was thought through on his knees. So he’s asking for it, not only the period of time, but for predecessors to get there. But that’s not all. "And a letter unto Asaph the keeper of the king’s forest that he may give me timber to make beams for the gates of the palace which is near to the house and for the wall of the city and for the house that I shall enter into." (Neh. 2:8) I’m going to need

wood. I'm going to need supplies. I'm going to have to have the funds necessary to do this great twelve year job. Provision, and then one I don't think Nehemiah asked for.

Protection

Look down there in verse nine, "Then I came to the governor beyond the river, and gave them the king's letters." This was now while he was on his way. "Now the king had sent captains of the army and horsemen with me." What's that? Protection. There they are: the period of time, permission, provision, protection. It's all done, all ready. Ready to go. Isn't this a marvelous answer to prayer? God answers prayer. And he answered Nehemiah's prayer. And before we know it, he is there. Verse 11, "So I came to Jerusalem, and was there three days." Living in the wonder of answered prayer, just a marvelous, marvelous thing.

Valiant in Fight

But now we come to a well I tried to make it emphatic in my outline, I changed from red to black. The first element of conflict. Everything's going along fine, isn't it? Wasn't it marvelous to study all of chapter one and the first nine verses of chapter two and everything is what, valiant for the truth, valiant for the truth. Positively, things are really moving. But there's another half to this. What is it? Valiant in fight, and sooner or later every opportunity that God gives you will be challenged by the devil's opposition. Now get ready for it, I'm not trying to build in you a martyr complex. I despise a martyr

complex. Nor am I trying to give you a case of persecutory delusions, thinking there's something after you that isn't. I'm giving you Bible however because as an evangelist I have dealt with thousands of heartbroken young believers who were shocked at the awful opposition that came into their lives soon after they became Christians. Somehow they felt that because they became Christians they were going to be a carefully wrapped package, branded fragile this side up, bound for heaven. All of a sudden they hit

something they never dreamed was there because someone had not properly warned them of the conflict of the Christian life. Fight the good fight, lay hold of eternal life.

First element of Conflict

Verse 10, first element of conflict. Here it is, "When Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, heard of it." Heard of what? Heard of all that God had done in the miraculous leading of Nehemiah unto the place where he was going to build a wall and bring about spiritual awakening." (Neh. 1:10) What happened? "It grieved them exceedingly that there had come a man to seek the welfare of the children of Israel." There are going to be some people who are not going to like what you are doing for God. There is always going to be a Sanballat always going to be a Tobiah. A little bit later, the third member of this satanic trinity appears. His name is Gesham. And the enmity is set up.

Now if all of you folks have not read two books, and you haven't got enough money to buy them, sell your shirt or your dress or whatever you don't need, and buy them. John Bunyan's, *Pilgrim's Progress*. Oh that's old Jack, that's old fashioned. Yeah it's pretty old, but it's a living emblem however of what we're talking about in this book. John Bunyan was a Baptist preacher. They told him he couldn't communicate the gospel. He communicated the gospel. They put him in Bedford jail for 13 years. But while he was in Bedford jail, he wrote the *Pilgrim's Progress*. He wrote the *Holy War*, that's the second one. His little blind daughter went from house to house baking bread while he was incarcerated. Charles Haddon Spurgeon, the great hearted of Baptist preacher said,

“The book which affected my life more than any other book outside the Bible was the *Pilgrim’s Progress*.” Spurgeon read it first at the age of five when most of our kids are trying to master Mickey Mouse. He died at the age of 57. He had read it 100 times.

Charles Haden Spurgeon’s father was a Puritan preacher, his grandfather was a Puritan preacher, his great-grandfather was a Puritan preacher. Ten generations behind him were Puritan preachers. He came home to his mother at the age of 16 and said, “Mother, God’s called me to be a Baptist preacher.” She said, “Charles, I always prayed you’d be

a

preacher, but I never prayed you'd be a Baptist." Spurgeon said, "God always gives you more than you asked for." Now in case you think I'm flying the Baptist flag, let me give you some news. I'm a First United Baptist Methodist Presbyterian. We need a renewal of the realities of the conflict of the Christian life. I'm to be at three colleges this fall, PCB, and Baptist Bible in Clark Summit, and Northeastern Bible College. And at PCB I have selected "Fight the Good Fight of Faith: The Christian's Warfare." I believe the kid's need that for a solid week. We're going to be dealing with the Christian's warfare, that's a completely different series than this, but there's a great deal of that truth in Nehemiah.

"Now nothing happens, it's just announced that they were exceedingly grieved that there had come a man to seek the welfare of the children of Israel" (Neh. 2:10). Now we move into the other positive sections of the book, quickly now. Time is slipping away very quickly. And here we go now, the survey, Nehemiah comes after all he had never seen Jerusalem as far as we know. And now he's on the scene. And it's one thing to get a pattern of division on the mount. Last night we had a great service in this room and we had a young couple going to France. We had another young couple going to Spain. We had someone going to Portugal, or Argentina or Japan and the vision of what God is leading them to do. But one day they are going to step into that country and they are going to see it as it is. It's not going to be quite the same as they saw it on the pattern on the mount. And they are going to get down to the nitty-gritty. And many times a person comes to that nitty-gritty and turns back.

Now Nehemiah spends three day looking over his broken walls, looking over his charred, burned gates, examining the condition of God's remnant in the land. And when he got through, which he did quite secretly, after all you don't need to let everybody know what your spiritual plans are. The devil is not omniscient, nor is the devil omnipresent. There are some things that he does not know. And therefore, after he finished all of this we have one of the great characteristics of leadership. And some of

you men, and by the way I liked that little expression over on the bookstore, it identifies reading with leading. And that's true. The greatest reading of course is in the Scriptures for leadership and this is one of the greatest books ever written on leadership.

Demonstration of Power

Now Nehemiah comes, he's alone. Oh he may have a few that have prayed with him. There may be a few companions, but to tackle the job that he has to tackle, he's got to have help. So he comes, and notice his program. I'm speaking to some pastors here, now I realize there are a number of them here because I have had personal interviews with a number of them already. A great many pastors and I've been a pastor four different churches, find out what the consensus of the congregation want and then trip along and follow them and do it. That is not leadership. And there are a great many pastors who simply spend all of their time in the problems that exist in the people. That is a ministry, no question about it. You must be problem conscious and meet the problems. But there's something far greater than that, and that is there must be the demonstration of power as well as the solving of problems.

And so he came to the people now, and this is the crisis moment, the great crisis and he meets them. And he said, "Then I said unto them," verse 17, "Ye see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lieth waste, and the gates are burned with fire: come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach" (Neh. 2:17). What did he do? He made sure they knew what the need was.

The Need

You know you're not going to lead someone to Christ unless there is a consciousness of what they are being saved from, as well as what they are being saved unto. You don't call for the doctor unless you realize that you need the doctor. "Ye see the distress." Is there anybody here who isn't convinced of the pinnacle conditions we have? The condition of the remnant, the condition of these walls, of this holy city, the condition of these charred gates. We're in trouble. Evidently he convinced them. Then he

said let me tell you a very remarkable thing. He told about being the king's cupbearer, he told all the story in detail that I have told you in these first two messages. Why the Bible says, "Then I told them of the hand of my God which was good upon me; and also the king's words that he had spoken unto me." He gave his testimony. If there's one thing that is very important, it is that that pastor know that God led him to that pulpit and he is there in the will of God, not simply because he had a unanimous vote of the congregation. There is nothing more inspiring then a man who stands in the pulpit and declares, "This is God's place for me." But if he is always worrying about whether he should be someplace else, he is never going to breed that confidence into other people. By the time Nehemiah got through as a leader, they knew that he had been led to that spot. Now leadership is finding out what God wants you to do and then bringing other people to the place that God has revealed to you must be done.

A Force to Work With

Now this great group of people now are not just a field to work in. They become a force to work with. And preacher, that's going to be the turning place of your congregation, a force to work with. Filling up they used to say Sunday night, a young fellow introduced me way down in Louisiana. And as he introduced me he said, "I attended this man's church when I was a student at Philadelphia College of Bible. I was out on assignment at times, but every time I didn't have an assignment I was at the Church of the Open Door." And he said, "I can honestly say I was never in a service where I did not see public decisions for Christ." And then he began to talk about the

evangelistic gifts of this man. And I got up and told him something, and told the rest of the folks something. I said any man could win people to Christ in that church in that day. He said what do you mean? You realize I had thirty-five or forty men who walked the streets of Philadelphia for three hours every Sunday morning, every Sunday afternoon and worked like dogs. I never stood in my pulpit without knowing that there were many many people who needed Christ who had been prayed for, who had been loved, who had been befriended, who had been contacted, and who had been brought and put there and

ready to be saved. You believe that? Any kid could get up, who really knew the gospel, and win people to Christ in that church. Now some of the members of that church are here, so you can talk to them about it. They're still following me around for some reason. I preached on tithing one Sunday morning and nine sailors got converted. My board said you ought to preach on money every Sunday morning preacher. No, they were all ready. Why, I had a force of people who were working. I was just their leader. I didn't do all the work. People used to come to me and say this man wants to be led to Christ so I said, go ahead and lead him to Christ. Why should I have all the blessing of leading someone to Christ, you do it. Okay, okay they would cry.

Element of Conflict

Nehemiah got his force going, why here it is. "And they said, Let us rise up and build. So they strengthened their hands for this good work." Isn't that a good word, they're ready to go. Wait a minute, wait a minute. You never get any progress without what? The next element of conflict. The second element of conflict is here in chapter 2 verses 19 and 20. Notice what it is folks. "But when Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, and Geshem the Arabian," that's the third one, "heard it." Heard what? Heard of this tremendous progress which was being made. These liberal churches they say what, they go on just fine. They never hear of any rupture or any disagreement or any real battle in the church. Why should there be, if the devil's got them he's not going to be interested in fooling around with them. He's got them already. I wouldn't give you two cents for a church that didn't have problems. But it's

one thing to have the problems. It's another thing to solve it. It's got to be solved. It's going to be there. The problem's going to be there. The devil's going to see to it.

I can remember in that same church with the front of the auditorium lined up with people and personal workers going and hell breaking loose in the back of the auditorium of criticism of the very people that were members of that church. They go together. I'm used to living with opportunity and opposition.

So was Nehemiah. So what did they do? Look at it now. You know this book is so practical. Some of you when I began to study I'm sure kind of said well that's kind of an old book. 25 hundred years old in the Old Testament. It must have mold on it, what in the world is he going to get out of that? Boy you look like it you, you've got crepe on your nose, and your chin on your chest, and you're singing hold the fork for I am coming. Your face may be so long that you could eat oatmeal out of a four inch gas pipe without much trouble. This is a living book. This is just as living as the gospel of John. It is equally the word of God. This wasn't written for Nehemiah's generation, it was written for every generation. This is the forever generation. These principles will be eternal when all time has passed and we're into eternity. These are eternal principles.

What did they do? Well, what do they say? "They laughed us and despised." Okay let's run the test. Now think with me, we have a lot of laughter in the beginning of the service. Most of it is because of jest and humor and all the rest. But this is in a different vein now. How many of you when you do the right thing, how many of you love to have people laugh at you? Oh, no hands. No it's not easy to be laughed at, but sooner or later it's going to come, maybe right in your own family.

Then the second one is what? "Despise us." I'll ask it this way. How many of you, come on now think with me, how many of you really like people to like you? Put your hands up. Come on, put them up you liars. Both of my hands were up. I like people to like me. But sooner or later for your stand for Jesus Christ, you're going to meet up with somebody that doesn't like you. Nehemiah did. They despised us. That's not easy to

take.

Well, what did Nehemiah do? Well they pulled rank on him you know you service men. You kind of know what that expression means. They said we're going to tell the king. What you're doing we're going to tell the general, we're going to tell the captain, we're going to tell. Oh what if Nehemiah was over in Jerusalem because the king by his whim had put him there. Nehemiah wasn't over there because the king gave him the

disposition to come. You say what do you mean? That's just what you said a few minutes ago. No I didn't. Now look at the end of verse 8. "The king granted me, according to the good hand of what? My God upon me." (Neh. 2:8) Nehemiah, I'll give you a little bit of theology now. Fasten your seatbelts and set your false teeth. You may not like it, but I'll give it to you anyway. We call first cause in theology and our second causes. The first cause of every man's salvation is God. Salvation is of the Lord. But it may be true that some spirit filled Christian worker may lead you to Christ. He is the instrument of God's what? Second cause. We commonly speak of second causes, but we never should forget what? The dominant priority of the first cause. It is of the Lord. No one here is saved apart from those words. It is of God. Okay? Now here we have it in guidance. Sure, the first cause of Nehemiah being in Jerusalem was God. According, and this is a favorite expression of Nehemiah, "according to the good hand of my good upon me." (Neh. 2:8).

And the second cause, little thing to do, Lord reached down just took the heart of the king and twisted it and said you do what I tell you to do. You give Nehemiah what I tell you to give him. Turned alright. That second cause. It's wonderful to be in touch with God who deals with kings, changes their mind, changes their disposition. J. Hudson Taylor, the great China missionary, used to say, "Learn to move men through God by prayer alone." "Learn to move men through God by prayer alone." So Nehemiah didn't answer their charge they'll tell the king. He said, "The God of heaven, he will prosper us." (Neh. 2:20).

Draw the line: Separation

But then he said something else. “You have no portion, nor right, nor memorial, in Jerusalem.” He drew the line, the line of separation, the line of separation that is as distinct as black and white all the way through the scriptures, the line between belief and unbelief. In case you think I’m preaching Old Testament, Corinthians tells us, “Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers.” That’s what it says. And that truth is there there’s a separation of light and darkness. These were men who did not believe what

Nehemiah believed. Paul said it in Galatians, he said if any man come preaching any other gospel, let him be what? Accursed. He drew the line. He drew the line. The line's drawn here. They had no right to the work in the sacred enclosure. Back in Ezra, Zerubbabel and Joshua said, "Ye have nothing to do to build us an house unto our God. That didn't mean that they were not concerned for them. They would have gladly received them had received God's message, but they were God's enemy.

Building the Wall

We're going to deal with chapter three very quickly this morning. Building the wall, we're back to the positive again. We're in red ink this time. And again, some of you labored through. You labored through chapter three and thought that you had to pronounce all those 38 difficult names. That's a tough, tough chapter. That's right, it is a tough chapter, a very, very difficult chapter. But in this chapter there are some great gems of truth. Now I wish I could take really a half hour on every one of them.

Splendid Organization

Number one, splendid organization. You can't read chapter three without being conscious of the fact that Nehemiah had his forces thoroughly and splendidly organized. There's nothing unspiritual about scriptural organization. You hear me? Some folks think that, but that isn't true. Here they are organized to do the job. Second at the same time, it was not in organization, the destruction of individual initiative. You'll read the chapters and you'll find people doing more than they need to do. Yet another piece, yet another piece, yet another piece, and here we find people who are doing this

individual initiative. Bringing out the characteristics of God-given initiatives that he has given every one of us. Again, honor to whom honor is due. The very chapter itself is an honor roll. The chapter commends the people who do a job, and also the chapter rebukes the people who were lazy. Honor to whom honor is due.

The False Ideal

Number four, the false ideal. What do you mean Jack? Well if you read in verse five it says, "And next unto them the Tekoites repaired; but their nobles put not their necks to the work of their LORD." The leadership of the Tekoites refused to do what they should do. But you'll find way over there in another portion of the book, that the Tekoites themselves didn't follow their nobles in verse 27. They did their job anyway. And so the false ideal. Many, many churches do as much and follow as much as the leadership of the church. And sometimes the leadership is very sorry, and therefore the followership is very sorry. No, no you've got an absolute ideal, and that ideal is let this mind be in you which was also in Christ. And that is your ideal. You may gain from every other Christian the fine things that God does for them, but they're not your absolute ideal. Only Christ is your absolute ideal.

Record of Subordination

And then in this chapter you have the record of subordination. Most of them were Indians, not chiefs. In all of our churches, everybody wants to be a chief. There is great virtue and the will of God in followership as well as leadership. You hear me? Of course every followership has a measure of leadership, no question about it. No person who lives for the Lord, in any sense can escape the responsibilities of some kind of leadership. You are either helping or you are hindering somebody, but you understand what I'm talking about here, these who are distinguished in name as leaders. Harry Balback and Jack Wurthson and Don Roberts and Jimmy Dion and all the rest of the

leaders here could never do what they're doing without the some 5 or 6 hundred staff members that stand behind them to do this job. That's what I'm saying, see. So here it is in the chapter, there is a proper subordination. Much of it is the ministry of the unnoticed, but it is a God-given ministry.

Third element of Conflict: Anger

Alright quickly now, the third element of conflict in chapter 4. Let me just read it

for you. "Just as soon as that wall got going, it came to pass that when Sanballet heard that we were building the wall, he was angry and felt great indignation and mocked the Jews. He spoke before his brethren, the army of Samaria, and he said, what are these feeble Jews doing? Will they fortify themselves? Will they sacrifice? Will they finish in a day? Will they revive the stones from the heaps of the rubbish seeing they are burned? Now Tobiah the Ammonite was by him, and he said, even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall" (Neh. 4:1-3). Anger. They couldn't stop the work, so they called the Jews feeble. Beware of that kind of a strategy, if you can't answer a man's truth, trying to destroy the man. Many people are doing it. But you know a little group of people God-inspired and God-led can accomplish things that the world never, never will understand. The preaching of the cross is to them that perish what? The natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God for they are what? You know we could announce this morning that we are all going to be contributors, as many as would to the Red Cross blood bank. That would hit the papers in the area. One hundred and eleven people are sold, gave a pint of blood to the Red Cross blood bank of tremendous saying. The world would understand that. But the worst drunken bum or the worst red lettered scarlet harlot that ever walked the streets of Scroon Lake could be saved in here this morning and you couldn't get a line about that in the newspapers. Which is more important? Well you know the answer. But the world doesn't understand that, so don't labor in trying to get them to understand it.

What do these feeble Jews? What are they going to accomplish? Are they going to

make an end in a day? What could they possibly make out of that rubbish? This kind of smarted a little bit. I wish I had time now to deal with Nehemiah chapter four verses four and five. It takes a lot of study. Some of you may disagree with the sentiments in this prayer. But don't study it without thinking of the words of Jesus in the 23rd chapter of Matthew as he spoke against the Pharisees, who destroyed the truth. And please don't forget Paul in the first chapter of Galatians, when he said if any man preach any other

gospel, let him be what? Accursed. There is no contradiction between what Nehemiah is talking about and what Jesus talked about and what Paul talked about. It may seem severe, and it is in theology what we call the imprecatory sections of the book. But here is a man who has so identified himself with the work of God that it cuts him to the quick when these seek to destroy. But look at verse six quickly again. Here's a summary of the work. The Bible says this, I like this verse. "So built we the wall; and all the wall was joined together so half of it to half of its height: for the people had a mind to work" (Neh. 4:6).

Element of Conflict: The fight

One more element of conflict quickly, the fourth element. Chapter four verses 7 and 8. Let me read it. "It came to pass, that when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and the Arabians, and the Ammonites," they're increasing, "and the Ashdodites, heard that the repairing of the walls of Jerusalem went forward, and that the breaches began to be stopped, then they were very angry, and conspired all of them together to come to fight against Jerusalem, and to hinder it." Now comes a very serious thing. It's becoming more intense. Now there's the threat of physical harm. Study Jesus and the increase in opposition in the climax of the cross. Study Paul with the increase in opposition in practically every town he preached in. Study this increase, 3,000 souls under Peter's ministry. And under Stephen's, 3,000 rocks. There's a picture. The picture's here in Nehemiah. It's getting tougher. Why? The wall's getting higher. Amen. Get ready for that opposition. Paul said, "I have fought a good fight. I have finished my course. I have

kept the faith.” It’s what? Building, battling, the olive branch, the bundle of arrows, defensively fundamental, aggressively evangelistic. The trowel and the sword.

Exhausted and uncertainty

Alright, we’ll wind down and pick it up again tomorrow. What did Nehemiah do now? Why, because he had something else that was really rather irritating. The people inside began to buckle. The very people that stood with him inside the wall began to

show characteristics of weakness and this is always a property of leadership. You know leadership many times is very lonely. Jesus frequently walked alone. He had to. There were times when all forsook him and fled. And there are characteristics of leadership that are a very lonely road. Now Nehemiah is in that singular position. Why? Well, there was manifestation of weariness. People began getting tired. They were exhausted. The burdens were heavy, the rubbish was high. It didn't seem like they were getting anywhere, and they began to be physically exhausted. I talk to a dear brother after the lecture the other night about a Ahithophel. Now all of these human characteristics enter into this. Physical exhaustion, emotional exhaustion, mental exhaustion, it all has a bearing. Many times what we need in the battle is just to crawl up on the bed and get a good solid hour's sleep and then come out fighting. Or get on your knees and get fortified and come out fighting. So Nehemiah faced people who were exhausted, who were weary as the word is here. And then there was uncertainty. The attack was coming from almost anywhere. What's next? What's going to happen? We don't know if we could see where it was coming from it'd be one thing, but we can't. Psalm eleven. The Bible says "The wicked put the bowl upon the string that they may in private, in darkness, shoot at the upright in heart." And the psalmist says, "when the foundations begin to shake, what shall the righteous do?" I don't know where the opposition is coming from, it comes from the most unexpected places. And uncertainty is many, if I knew, if I could just get at it. But I can't get at it. Many times I can.

Incessant Opposition and Fear

Again, number three, incessant opposition. Ever hear of the Morton salt motto? "When it rains, it pours." Sometimes the devil just takes them one right after another. Bing, bing, bing, bing, bing, bing. He never lets up. Why, he's going to crush it. It's incessant.

And then again fear. There's something worse than fear, and that's false fear. You say, what do you mean? The Bible says something about the wicked fleeing when what?

No man pursueth. But you know there's a lot of Christians fleeing because no one is pursuing too. They just think they are. Oh, but, but, but. Nail it down now, what is it? But I can't nail it down. I just think it's there, and that's unfortunate. And so we have the word "fear."

Conclusion: Persistence

And now to kind of wind this up, what did this Nehemiah do? What if he had said, well it's no use. This crowd is for the birds. There must be another church somewhere that would appreciate me more. Now they got the leader too. Why, he's indulging in self-pity. Poor guy. Poor me. They don't appreciate me. I'll go someplace where they do. So you find preachers popping around, two and three years in a spell and on till they preach their sermons and go to someplace else and when the opposition comes they desert. Not Nehemiah. He stands there. You know I used to have a son who was an all-American football player. He was nominated by the Football Sports Writers of America for all-American. I always liked to watch Steve. He was a linebacker. I'd see him walk behind whoever was on the line, whether it was an 8 man line, 7 man line, or 6 man line. Smack that one, smack that one, and he'd stir up the line. He was a spiserinctum. He was a peppercack. He was the barbed wire. He was the team leader. He inspired them to get at it. That's Nehemiah.

Building and Battling

Nehemiah says you're looking at everything on a horizontal basis, all of these are his actual words. He said, "Remember the Lord" (Neh. 4:14). What verse is that in? There it

is in verse 14. Be not afraid of them, look vertically. Remember the Lord. He got their eyes where they should have been. He changed his working conditions a little bit.

Instead of all trowel and building now, he had some with a trowel in one hand and a sword in the other. You don't meet opposition unless you have to, but when it comes get ready for it and get ready and prepared to meet it. But he never stopped building.

Notice that? You know, unfortunately in this country, there are some people who forgot to build

and they are doing nothing but battling. They're like Peter in the Garden of Gethsemane, cutting off ears, that's all. That's all. It's unfortunate. But there are other people who are so positively valiant, that they don't recognize the negative in the Scripture, and they do all building. And right behind them the devil destroys it all because there's no proper polemic. The power of positive thinking has got to be the power of negative thinking too. Not only building, but what? Battling. That's the picture.

So we summarize it in this little word. Oh but how I could say so much more. Verse six, verses nine. Three things, you've got them in the notes. A heart to pray, an eye to watch to see where the enemy is coming, and all the time what? A mind to work. That's a great combination. And it's a wonderful picture of the threefold emphasis of the Christian life. Alright, let's pray.

Our Father, take us from this auditorium with that theme in our hearts. The theme of David, given to him by the Lord arise and be doing, the Lord shall be with thee. And Lord help us to be doing, help us to be doing thy will. And help us to be challenged and inspired by this tremendous book we're studying. Make it a great day today. A day of victory in every heart. In Jesus name, Amen.