

# **THE LOST AND US - 3**

## **"LET US RISE UP AND BUILD"**

**[Building from the Knees Up! Get them knees on the ground!]**

### **Nehemiah 1**

#### **INTRODUCTION:**

- I. The Lord needs builders to build up and maintain His temple in MANTECA, CALIFORNIA today!
  - A. Many of you here have been involved in various building & rebuilding projects over the years!
  - B. You NEVER got ANYTHING accomplished -- **and no project was ever finished** -- if you acted like a lot of us have acted at times in building up the Temple of the Lord!
- II. And I'm sure you understand that I am not primarily talking now about building up **physical structures**.
  - A. I am talking about **building character**, which we must do to be able to SHOW Jesus Christ living in us! **Gal.2:20-** *"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me."*
  - B. I am talking about **building up the kingdom of God, the church of Jesus Christ**, which is necessary to honor and glorify Christ today!
  - C. I am talking about **rebuilding lives shattered by sins**, which we must **convert** if we're to be a part of the family of God, and be one of the heirs of heaven!
- III. Very often **in each of our lives** [*depending on the importance we have in serving the Lord*] we must work on rebuilding the structure of our **peace of mind**, and of our **confidence**, and of our **commitment to God**. **Isa 49:15-16-** *"Can a woman forget her nursing child, And have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, but I will not forget you. 16 "Behold, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands; Your walls are continually before Me."*
  - A. There are normally **three phases** in building up our lives as a part of God's temple!
  - B. The 1st phase is **evaluation**; the 2nd is **reconstruction**; the 3rd is **perseverance**.
- IV. Nehemiah was a great builder.
  - A. The nation of **Israel had been destroyed because of her sin**.
    1. Jerusalem was burned with fire, much like a ravaged city that had been bombed.
    2. The Jews were marched **over 800 miles** to Babylon and stayed there for about 70 years.
  - B. After the Persians defeated the Babylonians, Cyrus allowed the Jews to return to Jerusalem.
    1. There were three groups that returned.
      - a) **First group** returned under Zerubbabel in about **538 B.C.**
      - b) 81 years later, in **457 B.C.**, a **second group** returned and it was led by Ezra.
      - c) 13 years later, about **444 B.C.**, Nehemiah led the **third group** back to Jerusalem.
    2. For over 90 years, the Jews lived in Jerusalem without any walls.
    3. The Temple was rebuilt but there was no protection.
    4. **The Story of Nehemiah** is how the walls were rebuilt under Nehemiah's leadership.
  - C. It is important to see and understand the chronology [**time frame**] of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther.
    1. Book of **Esther** relates some of the happenings while they were in bondage, and the improving of attitudes toward the Israelites.
    2. First return with Zerubbabel -- **Ezra 1-6** - also read Haggai & Zechariah.
    3. Second return with Ezra. **Ezra 6-10**.
    4. Third return with Nehemiah [**Nehemiah** - also read **Malachi**].
  - D. Nehemiah wears at least three different hats.
    1. He was the **cupbearer to the king**.

- a) This position sounds comparable to a dishwasher or waiter, but during that time, a cupbearer held a very honored position.
  - b) He tasted the food and wine for the king to ensure there was no poison.
  - c) A closeness often developed between the cupbearer and king.
  - d) Some historians have claimed that the cupbearer was in a great position to be able to influence the king more than anyone else, except the king's wife.
2. He was **a builder of the wall!** A builder's new ideas usually go through at least three channels: **Rejection, Toleration, Acceptance.**
  3. He was **governor of the city,** and also, he was a man of faith and a great spiritual leader.
- V. What we learn in the **Book of Nehemiah** can help all of us to be better builders for the Lord.

## **I. HE HAD A CLEAR RECOGNITION OF WHAT WAS NEEDED 1:1-3**

- A. He was well informed.
  1. Nehemiah did not try to escape reality.
  2. He asked for a report & when he was told "*it is terrible,*" he **LISTENED** to what was said.
- B. He listened to a reliable source (**Hanani,** who was his brother). **1 Cor 1:11-** "*For I have been informed concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe's people, that there are quarrels among you.*" **1 Tim 5:19-** "*Do not receive an accusation against an elder except on the basis of two or three witnesses.*"
- C. He didn't try to ignore what was wrong.
  1. It is possible he thought Jerusalem would be in better shape by now.
    - a) It had been 13 years since the return led by Ezra.
    - b) And 94 years since the first return led by Zerubbabel.
  2. But instead of prospering as they should have, the Jews were a reproach to the nations around them (SIN).
    - a) Jews had returned to Jerusalem, but they had not totally returned to God.
    - b) The Jews were doing poorly in the land because of their unfaithfulness.
- D. He sized-up the situation.
  1. The remnant was in great affliction & reproach.
  2. The wall of Jerusalem was broken down **Ezra 4:12-** "*let it be known to the king, that the Jews who came up from you have come to us at Jerusalem; they are rebuilding the rebellious and evil city, and are finishing the walls and repairing the foundations.*"
  3. The gates were burned with fire and Nehemiah knew that Jerusalem was in real danger without walls & gates.
    - a) Arab tribes from the desert could raid Judea.
    - b) Many would be tempted to raid the Temple because of the treasure. [Ezra had taken 28 tons of silver & 8-tons of gold to Jerusalem.]

## **II. NEHEMIAH WAS PERSONALLY CONCERNED AND SO HE GOT PERSONALLY INVOLVED WITH THE PROBLEMS 1:4**

- A. He wept over the situation. **Luke 19:41-** "*And when He approached, He saw the city and wept over it,*"
- B. He was going to rebuild the walls, but first he wept over the condition of the city.
  1. Too often people see problems, and then pretend they are not important, simply because they don't want to deal with them!

2. It is easier to just say, "*Everything will work out some way without getting involved.*" [cf. **Example of Eli: 1 Sam 3:11-14-** "*And the LORD said to Samuel, "Behold, I am about to do a thing in Israel at which both ears of everyone who hears it will tingle. 12 "In that day I will carry out against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end. 13 "For I have told him that I am about to judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knew, because his sons brought a curse on themselves and he did not rebuke them. 14 "And therefore I have sworn to the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be atoned for by sacrifice or offering forever."*"]

### **III. NEHEMIAH PERSONALLY PRAYED TO GOD CONCERNING THE PROBLEM, ALLOWING THE LORD TO SHARE THE BURDEN!**

- A. Nehemiah was a builder "*from the knees up.*"
1. **He was a man of PRAYER.**
  2. What is our usual first response to a problem when it comes up?
- B. Nehemiah knew how to pray, and it's such an important part of a godly, successful life that Jesus took time to teach His disciples how to pray! **Luke 11:1-4-** "*And it came about that while He was praying in a certain place, after He had finished, one of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray just as John also taught his disciples." 2 And He said to them, "When you pray, say: 'Father, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. 3 'Give us each day our daily bread. 4 'And forgive us our sins, For we ourselves also forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation."*"
1. **1:5** -- He began with praise.
    - a) He knew he was not approaching another man but the God of Heaven.
    - b) Nehemiah worked for the King of Persia, the most powerful man on earth at that time.
    - c) But Nehemiah understood that compared to God, Artaxerxes was nothing.
  2. **1:6-7** -- He confessed his part in the problem.
    - a) Notice the words "*we*" and "*I*" in the text. He was PERSONALLY involved!
    - b) A common tendency in our society and in the church today is to blame someone else for any problems that exist. **Luke 18:11-12-** "*The Pharisee stood and was praying thus to himself, 'God, I thank Thee that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax-gatherer. 12 'I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.'"*
    - c) Nehemiah's prayer is similar to the prayer in **Dan.9:5-6-** "*we have sinned, committed iniquity, acted wickedly, and rebelled, even turning aside from Thy commandments and ordinances. 6 "Moreover, we have not listened to Thy servants the prophets, who spoke in Thy name to our kings, our princes, our fathers, and all the people of the land."*
  3. **1:8** -- He prayed for God to fulfill His promises.
    - a) He referred to verses from **Lev 26:33** & **Deut 30:2-5**. Consider the promises of God that Nehemiah brings up in this prayer:
      - 1) If the people sinned, God said they would be carried off into a foreign land.
      - 2) But if they repented & obeyed God, He said He would bring them back to the land & protect them in a place He had chosen for His Name!
        - A) The first part had been fulfilled; they had sinned and been carried off!
        - B) Now it is time for the rest of the promise to be fulfilled, and Nehemiah fully expected that God would make good on His promise, with the same confidence that Abraham had that Paul mentions in **Rom 4:20-** "*yet, with respect to the*

*promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief, but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God,”*

- b) God has made promises to us. If we trust Him & obey Him, He will take care of us, give us peace, stability, and help us overcome the world. **2 Cor.1:20**- “*All of God’s promises are to those who are IN CHRIST!*”
- 4. He humbly made his request.... **1:11**- “*O Lord, I beseech Thee, may Thine ear be attentive to the prayer of Thy servant and the prayer of Thy servants who delight to revere Thy name, and make Thy servant successful today, and grant him compassion before this man.” Now I was the cupbearer to the king.*”
  - a) He never forgot his own weakness. **1 Pet 5:6**- “*Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time,*”
  - b) We must remember that if WE WILL TAKE CARE OF STAYING HUMBLE, then GOD will EXALT US when it is needed! Don’t be so arrogant as to think that you must try to accomplish GOD’S PART!
- 5. He was patient. **2:1**- “*And it came about in the month Nisan, in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, that wine was before him, and I took up the wine and gave it to the king. Now I had not been sad in his presence.*”
  - a) Four months passed before anything happened.
  - b) Nehemiah had been praying to God continually, but didn’t let it affect his **job performance**.
- C. Nehemiah knew that fervent praying by a righteous person will lead to action!
  - 1. Prayer causes us to wait and contemplate, then move and build!
  - 2. Prayer clears our vision and helps us to **watch and be ready for** God’s answer.
  - 3. Prayer quiets the heart, stabilizes our excitement, and focuses our attention.
  - 4. And prayer will activate our faith as God USES US in His answers!
- D. Nehemiah was **trusting God** to answer his prayers.
  - 1. Nehemiah knew that God would keep His promise; he simply had to be patient for God to **do His part in answer to his prayers!**
  - 2. He knew he had to be ready when God answered his prayer, so when the King asked him “*What would you request,*” he seized that opportunity for which he had been waiting!
  - 3. He knew, he had every confidence that God would give the success!

## **CONCLUSION:**

### **I. We need to be successful builders for the Lord.**

### **II. The example of Nehemiah’s life and attitude can help us, to be everything the Lord **wants OF EACH US IN HIS SERVICE!****

- A. He was more concerned for God and God's people than he was for his own well-being.
- B. He did not trust in *physical wealth, power, influence, nor in his own abilities.*
  - 1. Rather, he depended upon God Who had called him into service.
  - 2. He trusted in the Heavenly Father Who has the **POWER TO HELP**, and the **CARING DISPOSITION TO SAVE!**
- C. He understood his position before God.
  - 1. A sinner who could approach the Holy God of Heaven only by the grace of God.
  - 2. **BUT ALSO A SERVANT of God’s who was trying to show his love in his SERVICE!**
- D. He understood his success was because of the hand of the Lord. **Gal.6:14**- “*But may it never be that I should boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.*”

**III. Is your life shattered by sinful negligence and inactivity?** Have you been failing as a worker ON/IN the Temple of God today? Do you need some help to get started in ACTIVE SERVICE again? Then open up your life, and influence, and time, and assets to Jesus the Master builder.