

We have seen something of the steadfast character of the workers - Let us refresh our thinking and also look at a few more points.

- 1. they have a mind to work** Neh 4:6. God's love motivated and compelled them. *"I will not work my soul to save, for that the Lord hath done; But I will work like any slave, For the sake of God's dear Son."* Not only to work but to work together for one purpose and one goal.
- 2. A heart to pray, they made their prayer unto God** Neh 4:9. Those who believe and know God is a refuge will find a **hiding place** in Him a strong and a **mighty tower**. They will be safe under the **shadow of His wings**. Those who let prayer slip and don't pray will soon have no desire for His work. Gods work must be done with the spirit of God, it is by and through prayer that strength is imparted for service.
- 3. An eye to watch.** "We set a watch against them day and night" (Neh 4:9). Watching and praying is not carefully watching the movement of the enemy plotting their every movement. **They held spear in their hand.** Any enemy looking could see they never put down the spear. Night or day. Their constant state of readiness was a great deterrent to the enemies. While some were strong some were weak *"Then Judah said, "The strength of the laborers is failing, and there is so much rubbish that we are not able to build the wall.""* (Nehemiah 4:10). Was not Judah not supposed to be known as the Lion tribe. Christ is *"the Lion of the tribe of Judah."* But Judah, instead of being lion-hearted, made a noise more like a mouse than a lion. Poor Judah! He ought to have been bolder and braver; but he was not. **It is the same today;** some who seem to be pillars, prove very weak in the hour of trial, and by their cowardice discourage the rest. Christ told His Disciples - Mat 26:41. *Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation:* Sadly the Diciples were weak and weary and slept **I'm sure that if they prayed they would have been lion hearted and strong and not weak and awake and not asleep.**
- 4. The Workers' Devotion.** These men were so fully devoted to the work **that they willingly practised self-denial for its good.** How can we pretend to be consecrated to the work of the Lord unless we are prepared to sacrifice personal ease and comfort for His sake. **Their whole-heartedness** is seen in their working long hours. "From the rising of the morning till the stars appeared" (Neh 4:21). They were no just hirelings, yawning for the hour when

they might drop their tools and go home and work on their own private projects. **Those who long to get out of the work of Christ are unfit for it.**

It is one thing to be weary in the work, it is another to be weary of it. Their Zeal was for Jerusalem. **For us**, our Zeal is for Gods Kingdom. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; **but one thing I do**, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead,

Philippians 3:13

Today we move on to Chapter 5 – our Subject today is- **A FIGHT WITH**

SELFISHNESS. *“And there was a great cry of the people and of their wives against their brothers the Jews. For certain ones said, We, our sons, and our daughters, are many. Let us get grain for them, so that we may eat and live. Some also said, We have mortgaged our lands, vineyards, and houses. Let us buy grain because of the famine. And some said, We have borrowed money on our lands and vineyards for the king's tax. Yet now our flesh is like the flesh of our brothers, our sons like their sons. And, lo, we bring our sons and our daughters into bondage, to be slaves, and some of our daughters are brought into bondage. And there is no power for our hand, for other men have our lands and vineyards. And I was very angry when I heard their cry and these words.” (Nehemiah 5:1-6)*

Nehemiah bravely resisted the attacks of the enemies outside. **But he is just as bold against the grievances at home.** He keeps them from being destroyed by their enemies, but he also keeps them from being **destroyed from one another.** This is the complaint the ordinary people have against their Kingsman. They were forced to borrow money to get enough grain to keep their many sons and daughters alive. They were forced to borrow money, in this time of great famine, and had to give their fields and houses pledges. Then on top of that they had to borrow money to pay the Persian king's heavy taxes. The situation was very bad they were forced to sell their sons and daughters into slavery. Our daughters sold as maidservants, some of daughters had even been raped. We have no money to redeem our daughters out of slavery because other men have our land and houses.

Right here we see a shadow of selfishness-as black as midnight-dark and evil. Great distress had come into the city. The enemy had succeeded in cutting off the food supplies, and, alas, the wealthier people began to take advantage of their poorer brethren, by enriching themselves to their terrible cost. Lands, vineyards, houses, and even sons and daughters, were mortgaged, or exchanged for bread (Neh 5:1-5). Things got so unbearable that a "great cry" was raised by the people.

The behaviour of Nehemiah during this painful crisis gives us a further revelation of the greatness and stability of his character-features that everyone called of God into His service should have. **These features are-**

- I. **Uprightness.** "I was very angry when I heard their cry" (Neh 5:6). It is only the truly righteous soul that can be truly angry at unrighteousness. This is not that "*anger without a cause*" which is in danger of judgment (Mat 5:22), but the holy anger which is parallel to the "wrath of the Lamb."

It is sad, that there are so many of God's servants whose convictions don't seem to be pure enough, or deep enough, to move them with Holy Anger at the **heartless greed** of some who claim to be Christian. These men they were treating badly were "brethren" (Neh 5:1), but they should have showed brotherly love to them. Greed is wrong, wrong just look at some bible examples- **King Ahab coveted Naboth's vineyard** and allowed Queen Jezebel to plot Naboth's death and seize his land. **Judas driven by greed**, betrayed Jesus for thirty pieces of silver. Nehemiah had no greed no selfishness, or self-centeredness. Should we not be the same, being Christ's.

II. Courage. "Then I... rebuked the nobles and the rulers" (Neh 5:7). Courage in the Name of God is absolutely necessary in those called to take the lead in His work (Jos 1:6-7). Influential men with money, are often allowed to escape deserved correction, but Nehemiah rebuked them for usury... for not showing mercy. It was done in careful deliberation, **lest he should overreact or under react**. I read a paragraph about a servant who had offended His master. The master said I have nothing to say until my anger is passed. The servant of Christ must not strive either for personal advantage or the praise of men, but in the name of his Master he must fearlessly speak out the truth. When he found that his own words were hardly powerful enough with them, he gathered together the people and let them all have a voice, for in the many voices there was power. "I set," said he, "a great assembly against them."

- II. **Unselfishness.** "We, after our ability, have redeemed (we have bought back) our brethren the Jews which were sold unto the heathen; and will ye even sell your brethren?" (Neh 5:8). Nehemiah took upon himself both to **reform the oppressors** and to **relieve the oppressed**. He did everything and all he could do, to redeem to liberty those who had been sold unto

the heathen, but these selfish nobles and rulers had only wanted to get gain by selling their brethren.

Love for others who are in darkness, Love for the Lost - and a willingness to give according to our ability- **both of time and our effort, and our wealth**-for their salvation, these **are the unfailing marks of all those who sincerely serve the Lord Jesus Christ.**

IV. Holy Jealousy. "It is not good that ye do: ought ye not to walk in the fear of God (ought you not to walk in reverence) because of the reproach of the heathen?" to avoid the reproach because you are behaving like the nations around you- Because of your shameful behaviour. (Neh 5:9). When God's people do not walk in His fear they bring reproach upon His holy Name (Rom 2:24). "God's precious name is cursed among the nations because of you."

It is a sad fact that many of Christ's servants are more jealous or (desirous) **about the honour of their own name than His.** What hurts us more deeply when we are insulted; or when the name of the Lord Jesus Christ insulted or made little of? One Jealous for the Lord has all their interests so interwoven with the Name and work of our Lord, **that when He is touched we are touched,** and also those who honour Him, are honoured by us?

V. Thoroughness. Nehemiah was not luke-warm nor half-hearted. Whatever he did, he did it with his whole heart, as unto the Lord. His Diligence, was governed by the purest motives, he was acting in the clear light of the Divine will, it was not the wild fire of fleshly enthusiasm. The thoroughness of Nehemiah's character comes out here in these next verses "Restore, I pray you, to them, this day, their lands," etc. (Neh 5:11). And after he had received their promise to do so, see how he significantly "**shook his lap,**" warning them against unfaithfulness to their vows (Neh 5:13). **Such whole-hearted effort was crowned with success,** for "all the congregation said, Amen, and praised the Lord, and did according to the promise."

He set a good example, being full of Compassion and tenderness. Nehemiah provides an example of unselfishness. He speaks of his own practice Not to be a burden to the poor. The way of the governors before Him was not God honouring; they were given money for daily needs but they still demanded bread and wine from the people. **The Fear of God and reverence for God restrained Him from oppressing the people** Those who fear God will not dare to do

anything unjust and cruel to God's people. The righteous hate injustice wherever it's found. He was Generous not because he wanted the praises of men but generous purely for conscience's sake, because of the fear of God. What was remarkable about Nehemiah was that he did the work of a governor but did not eat the bread of a governor. Neh 5:14. **Why did he not take supplies and money from the people-** the reason He gives for his self-denial "*Because the bondage was heavy upon the people.*" *The Jews groaned under such hardship. He could not find it in his heart to add another hardship.*

The enemy tried all they could- But in vain do these fowlers spread their net before the eyes of the God of Heaven. They said, "They shall not know, neither see, till we come among them and slay them" (Neh 4:11). **But God knew, and God saw, and it was with Him.** It was like the conspiracy of thorns against the devouring fire. Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not triumph nor escape punishment. **All the united forces of hell cannot stop the progress of those who trust in God, and courageously do His will.**

This chapter concludes with a prayer – Oh my God remember me remember all I have done for the people. He doesn't expect anything from the people, but He looks to God to show him mercy and grace and kindness. Who forgets not what is done for his name's sake, Heb. 6:10.

Now Chapter 6 reveals two new trials to Nehemiah. "So the wall was finished on the twenty-fifth day of Elul, in fifty-two days." (Nehemiah 6:15). A remarkable feat, how discouraged the opposition was they had tried their best to stop it and now its finished in a very short time less than two months -

The Temptation to Compromise. This temptation came when news came that the wall was complete with no breaches. All through the building of the Wall there was attack and ridicule and mocking. Now that the wall is completed, they don't give up. Come down to our level. We want to meet with you- *but they thought to do him harm.* Come down to the plain of Ohno we want to meet with you – *pretending to be friendly-* Whenever the enemy speaks any words kindly or seems to be friendly it's not true, there are seven evils in his heart. Prov 26:25.

Although Sanballat sent messages four times he used the shield of faith four times and used the same answer I'm doing a great work and cannot come down.

He still had work to do the gates had not yet been hung. The enemy could no longer discourage the building so they sought to do away with Nehemiah. But failed again. The next attack was -

The false and accusing Report- In a way, what can we expect from the father of lies, the accuser of the brethren. **Here is the false report** - It's reported that you Jews plan to rebel and make you their King. That even the prophets are saying that there is a king in Judea. Now these matters will be reported to the King of Persia. So come and discuss, perhaps we can help you, and come to an agreement, is the tone.

Nehemiah is **very bold** and rebukes him saying **no such thing is true** you invent them in your own heart. **He not only denies the charge** but points out also the source of all the mischief, "**your own heart.**" The heart is deceitful above all things. It was a strong sharp word he spoke, but he knew that the seat of disease was deep down. **The man who would be faithful to God cannot always speak smooth things.** Mealy-mouthed (afraid to speak frankly or straightforwardly.) ministers will never accomplish much for the Kingdom of God. The faithful servant of Christ must reprove and rebuke, as well as exhort. *"Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine."* (2 Timothy 4:2)

Chapter 7 The walls are complete, and watchmen are set upon the walls. We read in **Isa 62:6** I have set watchmen on your walls, O Jerusalem, Day and night they cry out, praying, calling out, reminding GOD to remember. This is Nehemias Care He knows dead walls are of some help but watchman on the walls is a real defense.

Nehemiah cared deeply for Jerusalem. He had wept, he had toiled, He set all these things in order, He was used by God to knit the hearts of the people together. Used by God for the good. Suffered and endured, Trusted and prayed. This beautiful example must be our example, as we put our hand to our **labour of Love for Christs sake.**

AMEN