

Nehemiah and the completion of the wall.

¹⁶ When all our enemies heard about this, all the surrounding nations were afraid and lost their self-confidence, because they realized that this work had been done with the help of our God. Neh 6:16

NUGGET – At last! The wall is complete! The city is restored and there is security again in Jerusalem. In [verses 13-17](#) we're told, among other things, that it took 52 days, just under 2 months, to complete this work! A lot has happened in those 2 months that we've seen. And through it all, there has been opposition to these now completed walls. And now that the work is done there is a result not foreseen by us.

The enemies surrounding Jerusalem, for all their bluster and threat, seduction and schemes now, in the face of the success of God's faithful people, *have lost their confidence*. Those who opposed this work of God, this vision that God gave to Nehemiah; these enemies now face the reality that God has brought about, *through* the work of His people, His plans fulfillment. The enemies are faced with a Jerusalem that has been restored and has been done so with the help of God. That is plain to all.

This happened because God gave the people of Jerusalem faith to:

- grasp hold of the vision God gave them through Nehemiah and
- do the work needed to bring this to pass under God's direction.

Together faith in God and action based on His direction are powerful. The New Testament church came about because of these two things. Christ told the disciples in [Acts 1:4-9](#) that they would be given power through the gift of the Holy Spirit and that they were to take that gift and go and do one thing with it; be witnesses of Jesus Christ. They were given the Holy Spirit and thus given faith and then given the direction to go and testify to what they know to be true regarding Jesus Christ. And they were to do this starting in Jerusalem and then going out from there. Their witness now has reached all the way to Bolivar because of their faithful action and the "help of God."

The enemy of God will never be able to stop the hand of God. Satan can however defeat God's followers if they give-in to the bluster and threats, the seduction and schemes of God's enemies. We saw that in Jerusalem that *didn't* happen. The enemies lost confidence because of the "help of God" with the work of His faithful people.

[Jesus promises](#) in Matthew 16:15-19 that on the rock of Saint Peter's confession of Jesus as the Christ He will build His church and that the gates of hell will not prevail against it. We have the promise that our enemy, death, and even hell itself, cannot succeed. That sounds a lot like what we see in the verse from Nehemiah today, that our enemies lose heart, as we stand firm in the faith God gives us. Secure in that gift of faith, we can now put our hands to the tasks God gives us to do, confident of His guidance and that what we do will be accomplished according to His will.

APPLICATION – Jesus has finished the work of restoring us to God just as the wall of Jerusalem was restored. And we now live secure behind the 'wall' of redemption.

1. Stand firm behind the wall of a restored relationship with God. Let the next brick wall you see remind you of this.
2. Get a brick and set it by your door – as you leave for work or school, remember you go to God's vocation, God's calling, for your life and remember the help God gives to His faithful people as they work.

PRAY – Give God praise and thanks for His help for all you do and the 'wall' of salvation that is yours to live in each new day.

*Going Deeper together. We meet in the **Fellowship Hall** during the Education Hour for discussion and prayer with all those who're able to come. If you're not able to make it Sunday, please feel free to e-mail me with your comments or questions so that we can have the benefit of sharing them together.*

Peace in Christ, Pastor Tom Rhodes



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GOING DEEPER

Following the completion of the wall we are given information relating to the enemies that remain, the new order that is established in Jerusalem, and the return of the exiles.

Though the enemies lost confidence and though they are afraid, they still continue to work against God, Nehemiah and Jerusalem. Though the work is done the enemies persist. This sounds like the way sin behaves in our lives. Though Jesus has finished the work of restoration with God the Father, the enemy persists in pestering us and trying to get us to turn from the gift of faith and of trust in God. (*Where else in scripture can this trait of Satan's be seen?*)

Looking at [verses 17-19](#) we see the seeds of enemy rebellion in the letters to Tobiah from within Jerusalem. And there is Tobiah's continuing attempt to intimidate Nehemiah. How very like the devil. Though he is defeated by Jesus' death on the cross and Christ's victorious resurrection from the dead, the devil simply wants to ruin what God has accomplished for us in this act of reconciliation. Satan's pride is so great that he will not let fear of his sure destruction to come or his lack of confidence, again, knowing he has been defeated; none of these stop him from trying to bring down the wall of salvation that Christ has built for us and in us by faith.

Our knowing this and being aware of it is important. This knowledge gives us confidence in two things. One, that as we are attacked, we are being attacked for a reason, because we have trusted in God and His gift of faith to us through the Holy Spirit. (*Who else in scripture has had this happen to them?*) If we had not faith and trust, we would be left alone by the devil. And second, that no matter what the devil does to try and intimidate us, we have the wall! We have the restoration that *is* ours through the completed work of Jesus Christ. Satan cannot take that away try though he does.

Now after the wall is complete and the enemies continue their attack, things in Jerusalem are not brought to a halt for that reason. The attacks from without and within do not hinder the establishing of a 'new order'. In [verses 1-3 of chapter 7](#) we see that the gatekeepers, singers, Levites (the priests) and guards are all appointed and given their responsibilities within in the city's society.

Again like the church that Jesus establishes which faces opposition; that opposition is not allowed to hinder the progress of the church. In fact the church moves forward in its tasks, duties and celebrations. The parts and pieces are established so that the 'gossiping' of the gospel into the world can grow and continue. The worship of the church also moves forward in the face of those who would ridicule it or attempt to bring such honor to God to an end. The church moves and grows by God's will unstopped by enemy opposition.

Another thing this week to look at comes out of [chapter 7:4-6, 66-69](#). This tells us of the return of the exiles to Jerusalem. (And if you're so inclined, take a brief look at the intervening 60 verses to see the details of the list – again remember from last week that God deals in details, concretes and absolutes.) These are the people who are called from being scattered to being gathered. God has, through His vision to Nehemiah, rebuilt the Holy City. And now He repopulates that city which He has prepared for them.

Like these Jews returning from captivity to their home Jerusalem, so is the calling of all nations, tribes and peoples to Jesus Christ. We have our homecoming in Jesus Christ when He calls us to the heavenly Jerusalem that He has restored to us by His work for us. This image in Nehemiah of the scattered again being gathered reassures us that we too are to be given a home in the New Jerusalem.

One last thing to look at comes from one small detail from 7:4 –5 ***I found the record of those first to return.*** When I read that it reminded me of two places in the New Testament, the first was [Phil 4:3](#). There St Paul speaks of non-Jews, like you and I, whose names are written in the book of Life. Our names are recorded like those of the returning exiles to the rebuilt Jerusalem. The other place I was reminded of is found, appropriately, in the last paragraph in the last book of the bible, [Rev 21:22-27](#). God's heavenly city has been described and then we are told that the nations will come to it and those who are to enter it are those whose names are recorded in the Lamb's book of Life. (*Are there other stories in the scriptures that you're reminded of by this verse?*)

There is so much about who we are as Christians that we can learn from the Old Testament. This bit we've looked at, reminds us that God has always dealt with His creation by grace. We have such a rich treasure in scripture that speaks to us of the vast abundance of God's love to us that has never faltered, changed or given up, no matter what the opposition has been. For us that can be nothing but encouragement and hope. In Him alone we *have* Peace, Pastor Rhodes.