

# “REVITALIZATION BELONGS TO THE LORD”

## Reflection

The Bible’s purpose is not so much to show you how to live a good life. The Bible’s purpose is to show you how God’s grace breaks into your life against your will and saves you from the sin and brokenness otherwise you would never be able to overcome... religion is ‘if you obey, then you will be accepted’. But the Gospel is, ‘if you are absolutely accepted, and sure you’re accepted, only then will you ever begin to obey’. Those are two utterly different things. -----Timothy Keller

## Scripture

*Nehemiah 4:15–23 (ESV)*

*When our enemies heard that it was known to us and that God had frustrated their plan, we all returned to the wall, each to his work. <sup>16</sup>From that day on, half of my servants worked on construction, and half held the spears, shields, bows, and coats of mail. And the leaders stood behind the whole house of Judah, <sup>17</sup>who were building on the wall. Those who carried burdens were loaded in such a way that each labored on the work with one hand and held his weapon with the other. <sup>18</sup>And each of the builders had his sword strapped at his side while he built. The man who sounded the trumpet was beside me. <sup>19</sup>And I said to the nobles and to the officials and to the rest of the people, “The work is great and widely spread, and we are separated on the wall, far from one another. <sup>20</sup>In the place where you hear the sound of the trumpet, rally to us there. Our God will fight for us.” <sup>21</sup>So we labored at the work, and half of them held the spears from the break of dawn until the stars came out. <sup>22</sup>I also said to the people at that time, “Let every man and his servant pass the night within Jerusalem, that they may be a guard for us by night and may labor by day.” <sup>23</sup>So neither I nor my brothers nor my servants nor the men of the guard who followed me, none of us took off our clothes; each kept his weapon at his right hand.*

## Sermon Guide

From a human standpoint it might be argued, Nehemiah missed a good place to give up. But he didn't give up against these odds. He did what he could, stationing more people at the places in the wall more vulnerable to attack. Then he stood up and said, don't be afraid. You need to remember the Lord. The Lord is faithful. He is great and awesome, and He is on our side. We have the Lord and look at what we are fighting for. We are fighting for our family, our homes. We cannot give up!

So what do we do?

### PRAY

We are reminded that all of this is a spiritual activity, not just church services and prayer meetings, but even building walls is spiritual work. Even strategizing defenses and construction plans can only succeed if birthed in prayer.

### PLAN/PREPARE

Prayer is the starting line. It is the beginning of the race, it is not the only step.

Nehemiah didn't stop with prayer thinking that was all that was needed. When a lull came in the perceived threat against the Israelites, Nehemiah encouraged the rebuilding work to start again, each returning to his own work.

The sovereignty of God is not to be an excuse for negligence and dereliction of duty, whether the issue is prayer, evangelism, or the need to engage in defensive or aggressive warfare,

We are to work out our salvation with fear and trembling, knowing that God is at work in us (cf. [Phil. 2:12](#))

Part of the planning, the preparation is the honest reality that there will be opposition.

The world, the flesh, and the devil will seek every opportunity to oppose all forms of spiritual life and attempts to demon-

strate it. This may have appeared to be just another building project but it was much more than that. It was a project in which opportunities to demonstrate faith and spiritual courage would be manifest and, because of that, a project accompanied by fierce opposition.

## **PARTNER**

Notice the instructions Nehemiah gives. Notice the order. . . fight for your brothers! He tells them they must fight for their own. However, he starts by encouraging them to fight for others. We are assigned as a family to fight for other family members! Too many of us have no one to fight for us because we have failed to ever get our attention off of us long enough to fight for someone else first!

What we must set into place here is that when the alarm is sounded, when the call goes out, when someone is sick, when someone suffers loss, when someone's world breaks apart we join forces, efforts, and resources and respond. That is picture of the church.

When one part of the body hurts the rest of the body stays awake to keep it company.

## **PERSEVERE**

The people were prepared all the time for war, with a sword or spear, in one hand & with the other hand they build the wall.

*1 Peter 5:8 "Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour."*

### *How do you persevere?*

Your ability to keep fighting is determined by your ability to focus on Jesus Himself and the work we are called to Heb. 12:1-3.

It is time to refocus. Take your mind off everything but Him. Take your mind off the odds, the money, the disbelief, the fear and get your mind on the work and the one who called us to the work, the Lord who is great and awesome!

Boxers win the fight when they go one more round than their opponent.

## **TRUST**

Nehemiah spoke words of encouragement to the people. He reminded them that they were involved in a great work. After all, they were serving a great God and rebuilding the walls of a great city. He also reminded them that they were not working alone, even though they couldn't see all their fellow workers on the wall. God was with all of them and would come to their defense

### *How do we Prepare?*

Small Groups are where we get the tools to build and prepare for opposition. It is why we are all going through the same study. These are the tools you need to pray, plan, persevere, trust and work

We gather for worship.

### *How Do We Partner?*

We see a need and we pool our resources to meet a need.

### *What If?*

Part of the planning is how are we getting ready for the revitalization. How are we going to handle things when God answers our prayer for revitalization?

God will fight for us. Is there any time where God has lost the fight?

Nehemiah had many good traits, and he was a leader even by worldly standards. But what made him really great was his faith in God and his assurance that the God who had given him the task of rebuilding the wall would stand by him until the job was done. The apostle Paul wrote that God keeps at his work until the job is done: *"Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus" Phil. 1:6*