

## Talks – Nehemiah – myfishbites.com

### Nehemiah - Jehovah Comforts



Nehemiah was a prophet in the Old Testament who went back to Jerusalem, rebuilt the walls and helped the people turn back to God. In a way this is the kind of thing we are called to do today. Nehemiah means 'Jehovah comforts'. We'll also find that God's comfort means also means action! He was someone dedicated to God and living for something bigger than himself! This also encourages us to be full of God where you are!

### Prayer



When Nehemiah heard Jerusalem was in a bad way, the first thing he did was to fast (go without food) and pray. Prayer leads to action. But in order to do something about something, it has to move you or trouble you. A lack of action generally means you're not that bothered about something! You may say you hate injustice but are you going to do anything about it to show you care!

One Bible example is that the crowds that followed Jesus often had to travel a long, long way but their reward was healings, miracles and signs and wonders. Nehemiah was moved by the reports about the state of Jerusalem. So he prayed for some days. The question for us is whether we are so moved by evil things in our nation and want to see God's name made famous.

Nehemiah's prayer also came from a place of recognizing who God was, what God had done and remembering God's promises. These are great models of prayer for us – we can pray things that are in the Bible and even remind God of his promises (he doesn't forget, but when we pray them, we agree with God and will see things happen).

Nehemiah posted guards day and night on the wall and armed people to protect against the enemies. His prayer was that God would fight for them – but that they would take their positions. Same for us – prayer usually goes along with action!

### **Favour from the King**



When Nehemiah saw what was happening, he was brave and went to the King to ask for favour (which he got). Think about this – if Nehemiah got favour in another country with a King who wasn't even Jewish, how much more will God our Father answer our prayers and do good things when we ask! (See Matthew 7.7).

A famous missionary called Hudson Taylor once said "it is not great faith we need but faith in a great God." When we realise how big, how awesome and how powerful God is, we will start to ask him for great things to happen in our lives, our families, our country. If you're in school and you need to go to the toilet during a lesson, you ask a teacher because the teacher has the authority. When you go to God in prayer and asking things, you go to the creator of the universe!! He won't just answer every prayer like he's a slot machine but he will answer prayers that trust him and will bring him fame!

### **Rebuilding the Wall Together**



In Chapter 3 of the book of Nehemiah we see each person / group rebuilding the wall, stepping up, taking responsibility. The coming moves of God include us all – long gone are the days of when God would just use one big famous person. Today he uses all of us more and more, we just need to say yes to him!

At a worship and prayer event in July 2015 called Awakening Europe, the worship on the first night was amazing as people in the stadium sung, clapped, shouted and praised God – all without the band playing, as well as with the band playing. Everyone was in it together.

One of the best models of church life is that of a team. Some of my best memories are of doing things with groups of people and overcoming. In the book of Nehemiah, the people saw that they weren't simply building a wall. They were rebuilding a city, a nation and doing it for God's glory and fame.

There is a story of a group of builders working on rocks – one saw them as smashing up rocks, another earning for his family, the other saw he wasn't just chopping up stones, he was building a cathedral. He saw the bigger picture. The people with Nehemiah saw the bigger picture and the bigger picture was the glory of God – the same should be true for us.

## Opposition



It wasn't all easy for Nehemiah and his team rebuilding the wall... Opposition came because God's people wanted to move forward. This came through abuse, lies, trying to trick Nehemiah, people being aggressive and loud (eg start of Nehemiah 6). But Nehemiah refused to listen to them and kept on doing what God had called him to do. By the end of Chapter 6 the enemies had all run off. Sometimes satan makes you worried and full of fear about things and people. But we have to keep on going and living for God.

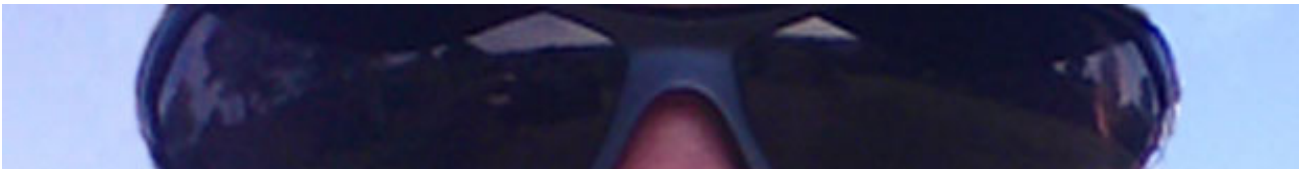
The tactics the enemies of Nehemiah used (to help us recognise them!) were:

1. Abuse – they shouted things at Nehemiah and the people. At a conference in May 2015, a man stood outside a conference in Plymouth England and shouted abuse and swear words at people for 45 minutes, accusing them of being nasty and full of hate! I think he had things the wrong way round!
2. Discouragement – this is like when we feel down or a bit fed up or sad. Often the enemy uses this tactic against Christians. He lies that you're not good enough, that you've done things wrong, that you're useless, that you're not making a difference or that God doesn't like you or has rejected you. All of these are complete LIES! And we must never listen to lies but only to what God says about us – in the Bible – and the things God will speak to you.
3. People may even try to harm you. This happens all around the world with 1000s of Christians being killed each year just because of their faith.

In July 2015 a Facebook post trended about a young person in New York who was worried about his future because he was gay. But around the same kind of time, a 19 year-old was killed in Syria because he had converted from Islam. His friend had to go into hiding because he was afraid of being killed. This (among many other stories like it) didn't trend on Facebook!

4. People will also lie about you and try to undermine who you are. They tried this with Nehemiah, making up things. But he knew the difference between genuine questions and opposition and refused to meet with them or listen to their lies. He told them he knew what they were doing and kept on standing and building the wall for God. We should do the same!

### **The Enemy Within**



A big problem that Nehemiah has was that the people inside Jerusalem started acting badly against each other, with the poor people being exploited by the rich people. It was wrong – Nehemiah called it as wrong – and the people changed their ways.

One of the things we always have to fight against is the war that goes on inside us – usually inside our heads! We can have all kinds of thoughts that don't come from us – but come from the enemy. They can be lies about what people think about us, lies about worries and fears that aren't real, we can think lustful thoughts or nasty things about people. The enemy actually doesn't have any power over you, except the power we give him. So it's really important to resist satan and all his rubbish.

How do we do this? We refuse to think about wrong things. We can tell the devil to get lost in the name of Jesus! We can think about good things – God things. We can pray and ask God to protect our minds. We can also pray verses from the Bible – like 2 Corinthians 10.3–6 or James 4.7. Or we can remember Ephesians 6 where we learn to protect our minds by remembering that Jesus has forgiven us for our sins. We just need to recognise when we do wrong things, say sorry to God and turn from them and simply believe and know that God has forgiven us!

## God's Word First - the Bible



Nehemiah put God's Word first. Too many in the church look around at society and what happens and say, 'hmmm. I wonder how the Bible relates to this.' That's fine. But we should never believe what we do because society says or does something otherwise we get things the wrong way round.. For example, in the Old Testament, people used to sacrifice children and burn them. We don't want to copy that! Instead, we need to go to the Bible first, find out what the Bible really says and then make decisions about what we believe and do.

In Nehemiah's day, the people stood in the gaps in the wall, with spades in one hand and swords in the other hand until the whole thing was rebuilt. God arms us with practical action along with prayer and the Word of God. And God's word is true, it is truth, it is tested, it is purified 7 times, it's powerful, it's effective, it's sharp, it's living and it does what God says it will do! Our world around us needs to know what God says but we need to know it first!

It's amazing how many Christians don't read their Bible or know it. How are we ever going to be effective if we don't know God or don't know what he says! Imagine if you were a mechanic trying to fix a car but you never read the car manual. How would you ever fix the car properly?!

In Chapter 8 of Nehemiah we find that the priest called Ezra reads from the Word of God publicly. He and the Word of God (the first 5 books of the Bible, as they didn't have the rest of it like we do) were set above everyone physically on a purpose-built stage. There was a move of God that saw everyone come, listen, bow down, worship with faces to the ground. And then they celebrated for 7 days! Who says that Christianity or the Bible is boring!! If it is then there's something wrong with us and not with God!

We need to be like Nehemiah, like Ezra and like the people in Jerusalem. We should put the Bible first and live our lives as God wants us to. So get some Bible notes (eg [Word 4U 2DAY](#)), some quiet-time notes, get a good Bible, read some good books about the Bible. Ask God to speak to you. Tell God you want to hear him speak and you're ready for an adventure like Nehemiah!