**WORK DONE WITH THE HELP OF OUR GOD**

Nehemiah 6:15-7:73a (Key verse: 6:16)

*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.*

The message is based on the book of Nehemiah chapter 6 verse 1 to chapter 7 verse 73a. Key verse is chapter 6 verse 16, let’s read it together one more time, *“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.*”

When we began the study of the book of Nehemiah, Jerusalem was lying in ruins. “*the wall was broken down and its gates were burned with fire.”* The people of God were *“in great trouble and disgrace.”* Nehemiah had set out to rebuild this wall of Jerusalem and today we finally see the work completed. The passage begins in verse 15, “*So the wall was completed on the twenty-fifth of Elu, in fifty-two days.”* The building project was completed in a very short space of time. Apparently, the constructed wall was 4 km long, that is almost the same distance that one would take to go around this university, using the roads outside. The wall was also 12m high and 2.5 m wide. Even the Jewish historian, Josephus, did not believe that the wall was reconstructed in such a short space of time. In his writings on *Antiquities,* he states that the work on the wall went on for two years and four months. How could the people of Jerusalem complete such great work in such a short space of time? This is because “this work had been done with the help of our God.” Amen!

In the previous sections, we saw how Nehemiah was significantly instrumental in the reconstruction of this wall. He took personal risks and approached king Artaxerxes to ask for permission. He also put his life in jeopardy when he had a standoff against Sanballat and Tobiah who opposed the construction of the wall. Nehemiah was also responsible for the well-fare of the people in Jerusalem: defending the poor and encouraging the workers to ensure that the work progressed without interruption. And today, we finally see the work completed. Now, as modern readers, we may be tempted to attribute the success of the construction to the excellent leadership of Nehemiah. We may say about the workers, “It is because they had such a good leader, that they managed to go through it all and rebuild the wall.”

Let’s read verse 16 again, “*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.”* This is how Nehemiah assessed the work done on the wall. He reports his conclusion through what the enemies had seen and said. Their enemies were afraid and lost their self-confidence. These enemies were right to be afraid, and they were right to lose their self-confidence. It is such a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the Almighty. For who can deliver from His hands? *All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as He pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back His hand or say to Him: “What have you done?”* These enemies are those people who were opposing the work of rebuilding the wall. They realize the folly of their actions and are now afraid of the God of Jerusalem. All their mockery and threats had turned to shame, humiliation and fear. Indeed, such is the end for those who mock the people of God and the work they do in His name; they are utterly humiliated and brought to shame. Even those who mock our evangelistic efforts today will face a similar fate if they do not repent. Take courage o’ Christian for in the end, we win. Those who mock the servants of God will be dumbfounded and as John prophesies, they will call to the mountains and the rocks, “*Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the lamb!”* That is our confidence in our service to God. That all the enemies of God will eventually come to their senses and see that all our work had been done with the help of God. Amen! As it says elsewhere, “*every knee should bow… and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is LORD, to the glory of God the Father.”* Amen!

Nehemiah had done a lot of work and had led the people of Jerusalem through a difficult time until the work on the wall was concluded. Yet, in all these, Nehemiah still gives the credit to God, saying, “*this work had been done with the help of our God.”* He does not beat his chest and think, “*I have led the people, I have done it.”*  He rather gives glory to God. This is the right attitude that a servant of God should embody. “*When you have done all that you were commanded say, “Alas! We are unprofitable servants; we have only done our duty.”* Nehemiah is not conceited; he does not think too highly of himself than he ought. He is well aware that apart from God, he could do nothing. He lives out here what Jesus taught His disciples, “*I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.”* It may have looked like Nehemiah was laboring through the work on his own and leading the people. However, in the final analysis, he gives praise to God, saying, “*this work had been done with the help of our God.”* Nehemiah is here teaching us one important lesson; that God is always with His people, wherever they perform work in His name. In our generation, we are taught to believe that the presence of God must be evidenced by supernatural signs or miracles. That if we do not perform miraculous healings or speak in tongues etc. then God is not helping our ministry.

Nehemiah was a man of prayer with a deep devotion to God. He spent 52 days working on the wall. In those 52 days, they did not experience a miraculous sign that suggested that God was helping them. It was only when he looked back in retrospect that he realized that God had helped them. It was when he looked back and considered the insurmountable challenges they overcame, that he could not but conclude that God had helped them. Many times we wonder if God is helping us through the works we do. We may be convinced that we want to do all things for His glory. We may be convinced that we are studying for His glory, working for His glory and even that we want to marry for His glory. Yet we may feel that He is not helping us when things look difficult or impossible. It is often difficult to determine with certainty that God is helping us when we’re going through the thing. There are many things I am unsure about in my life and at times I can’t see the active help of God in the things I do, only finding solace in that at least I aimed for His revealed will. However, if my young pilgrimage has taught me anything, is that God helps. When I look back, I see the path I have traversed. I remember in first year, I was not a Christian and I even used to mock my cousin when she would go to church. However, at some point I joined UBF and even at that point, there wasn’t an explosion or a whiplash of change. It was a gradually transformation from someone who mocked the things of God into “*How love I thy law”.* It is not a perfect life, but I can see how God has helped me, how He has changed me. I can also see how God has helped me from struggling with course, terrible roles at work and to finally being where I am now. I suppose the point there is that we may not always see the help of God, but he is always helping His people. “*Nothing is so tranquilizing and so stabilizing as the assurance that the LORD Himself is on the throne of the universe working all things after the counsel His own will.” “No revolving world, no shining of star, no storm, no creature moves, no actions of men, no errands of angels, no deed of the devil—nothing in all the vast universe can come to pass otherwise than God has eternally purposed.”* (*Sovereignty of God. AW Pink.)* That is where I draw strength and that is what I see when I look back. Amen!

Now, how else did God help Nehemiah? Let’s read verses 17 to 19, “*Also, in those days the nobles of Judah were sending many letters to Tobiah, and replies from Tobiah kept coming to them. For many in Judah were under oath to him, since he was son-in-law to Shekaniah son of Arah, and his son Jehohanan had married the daughter of Meshullam son of berekiah. Moreover, they kept reporting to me his good deed and then telling him what I said. And Tobiah sent letter to initimidate me.”* Here we see the extent of Tobiah’s influence upon the people of Judah. Tobiah was an Ammonite who married the daughter of Shekaniah who was a priest. Jehohanan who was his son, also married the daughter of Meshullam who was the high priest at the time. So, Tobiah rose to a position of influence because of his marriage to an influential family. Because of that, many in Judah were faithful to him. They kept telling Nehemiah about the good things that Tobiah was doing to try and have Nehemiah look upon Tobiah favorably, while at the same time, they reported all the plans that Nehemiah made to Tobiah who was enabled to plan new schemes to hinder the work. The nobles of Judah had held Nehemiah into a duplicitous friendship while they were sabotaging him. Accordingly, we can only imagine that Nehemiah could not hide his plans from Tobiah. Thus, if the LORD had not helped him, Nehemiah would not have been able to overcome Tobiah. He was only able to surmount him because of the help of God. Amen!

We have seen how God had helped Nehemiah and the people of Judah to rebuild the wall, even against the troubles of Sanballat and Tobiah. Now that the wall was completed, what did Nehemiah do next?

Lets read verse 1 of chapter 7, “*After the wall had been rebuilt an I had set the doors in place, the gatekeepers, the musicians and the Levites were appointed.”* Nehemiah never lost sight of why he had come to Jerusalem in the first place. One might think that now that the work is done, it is time for him to kick up his feet and enjoy the perks of being governor. Nehemiah knew that he had come to rebuild Jerusalem so that the people of Judah may once again be able to worship God in safety and freedom than ever before. This is why he did not only appoint gatekeepers, but he also appointed musicians and Levites who would lead the people in worship. Normally, victory tends to be such a distraction. We tend to abandon the work of God in the name of celebrating and losing focus. However, we see here that after being victorious, Nehemiah has a deeper sense of worship. I suppose that when we experience the help of God, we should also be led into a deeper sense of worship and gratitude. Otherwise we should question whether or not our help truly came from the LORD.

Let’s read verse 2, “*I put in charge of Jerusalem my brother Hanani, along with Hananiah the commander of the citadel, because he was a man of integrity and feared God more than most people do.”* There is a certain sense that Nehemiah was about to leave Jerusalem since his work was now completed. So, he appointed these two men to lead the people in his absence. Judah was previously led by monarchs, so it was imperative that men of a certain caliber are appointed. These such men were Hanani and Hananiah. Hanani is the brother of Nehemiah, he was not appointed out of nepotism. He is the one who went to Susa to tell Nehemiah about the news of the desolation of Jerusalem. He demonstrated with that, his love and affection for his country and willingness to serve it with integrity. About Hananiah, we don’t have much history about him, that is why scripture says, “*He was a man of integrity and feared God more than most people do.”* Prowess and skill are never leading traits when it comes to being appointed to service in the LORD. To be used by God, one must be faithful and fear God. Thus, Hanani and Hananiah were appointed. Maybe some of us may not necessarily be seemingly faithful or fearing God, thus we may wonder if we are any good to His people. But fear not, for the scripture says, “*God again set a certain day, calling it, “Today.” This He did when a long time later he spoke through David, as in the passage already quoted: “Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts.” Amen!*

In addition, Nehemiah charged them in verse 3, “*The gates of Jerusalem are not to be opened until the sun is hot. While the gatekeepers are still on duty, have them shut the doors and bar them. Also appoint residents of Jerusalem as guards, some at their posts and some near their own houses.”* The act of appointing watchmen is to ensure that security is enforced and that the people will live in safety. Here is particular, Nehemiah wants to avoid a case in which the walls of Jerusalem will be desolated again because of negligence. Often when we experience victory, we may grow complacent and start thinking that we are invincible. Those that are leaders in the church will keep the integrity and health of the church if they function as effective watchmen. We will also individually keep our spiritual life healthy and God honoring if we become effective watchmen over our lives. Peter says, “*Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same king of sufferings.”* (Pause)…if the LORD had not left us a remnant…Amen!

Finally, Nehemiah realized in verse 4, that “*the city was large and spacious, but there were few people in it, and the houses had not yet been rebuilt.”* Nehemiah here saw a need to repopulate Jerusalem because the city was large and there were houses which were abandoned. So, being a practical man, he took a census and also found the genealogical record of those who had been the first to return. And after all the work that was done, rebuilding the wall, setting up the gates and appointing the gatekeepers, musicians and the Levites, as well as Hanani and Hananiah, we read in verse 73, that these people finally settled in their own towns. Thus, finally bringing to an end the work that Nehemiah had began, rebuild the wall of Jerusalem. This work had been done with the help of God. When God helps, the work being done will always produce the results that will lead to the glory of God. Amen!

In conclusion,

Nehemiah was just a man. Neither a prophet, nor a priest nor an apostle. He did not come across miraculous signs as far as we can tell. He appears to be a super pragmatist when he is met with challenges. He prays to God and does not sit around passively waiting for God to act. He prays and wisely implements a solution and continue to do the work of God. I think that he is a best model for us today. We live in a time when miraculous signs are rare and others even believe that miracles have ceased, and who can blame them? Nehemiah faced the challenge of not being able to know the outcome from the beginning. God hath not said him, “*I will allow you to build the wall and finish it. No one will stand in your way.”* He could’ve had doubts, wondering if God would help Him. Yet, in the end, we see him concluding that, “*This work had been done with the help of God.”* It is truly amazing and encouraging that someone, especially a biblical and historical figure can experience God providentially and we can relate with him.

Soli Deo Gloria, for the glory of God alone. That is the goal and end of the life of a Christian. We must resolve to live our lives for and to pursue the glory of God. In that way, all the works that we do will be the works of God and God will help us. Now, it is not always easy to realize and appreciate the help of God while we are serving Him or while we are going through challenges. But what I learned from Nehemiah here is that at some point in time we will realize that God had helped us when we look back in retrospect. All we have to do is to be faithful and serve Him according to His word and continue to pray for His help. We need to only trust Him and practically walk according to His statutes and hope to look back at some point and declare, *“This work had been done with the help of God.”* Amen!