

Nehemiah 3

If you had to sum up this chapter with one word, what would it be? Nehemiah chapter 3 is all about building - how individuals pitched in and did the work together.....coordinated and led by Nehemiah.

Who is the first person mentioned as working on the wall (v. 1)? Eliashib -- the high priest!! Along with his fellow priests.

What section of the wall did they build? They rebuilt the Sheep gate.

What was the significance of the high priest working on the wall? Spiritual leaders must lead by their actions/example and not just by staying in their prayer closet. Eliashib was out in front of the work, leading by example which would serve as an inspiration/motivation to all who saw him. He did not think he was too “spiritual” for the hard work of rebuilding the walls.

What is the purpose of recording all these names? What does that tell us about God? God is a God of details. He is not just a big picture God. God keeps careful, detailed records of those who serve him. Also, there is great value in a name to the Jews. A name is associated with the reputation of a family. Note that almost everyone mentioned in the work was the son of someone.

In the same way, in the family of God, Kingdom work must be done with a common vision and mindset – *the mind of Christ*, as Paul described it in 1 Corinthians 2:16. When believers work together in one accord, yet with each offering their distinctive gifts, the work of God gets done in a glorious way.

They dedicated/consecrated the gate thus declaring it to be holy, i.e., set apart for God (v. 1). Why did they do that? The idea behind consecration is to recognize something as special, as uniquely set apart for God’s glory and service. These city gates were made especially for God. They were a kind of first fruits offering – the first completed section of the wall.

Did you ever consecrate or dedicate anything? Buying a new house. Getting married. Kids. Getting a new job. Moving into a new neighborhood.

What other vocations were involved in the wall rebuild? Goldsmith, perfume maker, ruler of half district, Levites, priests, merchants. Note that women were involved in the repair work as well as men (v. 12).

These were people of different professions, not professional builders. They were not trained or qualified for this kind of work which would have given them an easy excuse to not do anything, but they jumped in and did the work anyway. They fortified Jerusalem.

There were no civil engineers, brick masons, carpenters, etc. What is the message? The most important ability in the work of the LORD is *availability*. The one with few gifts and little talent, who has a passion and a drive to see God’s work done, will accomplish great things.

Tekoa was a town about 8 miles south of Jerusalem. The men of Tekoa are mentioned twice (vv. 5, 27). **What observations can you make about them?**

Nobles of Tekoa (v. 5)? They did not put their shoulders to the work of their Lord. These nobles from the city of Tekoa thought they were above the hard work, so they didn’t join in. They had a disdain for manual labor.

Literally, the idea in the Hebrew is that they wouldn't submit - they would not "bend their necks" to what the Lord wanted them to do. The real issue was *submission*. Maybe they thought they had a better plan, maybe they didn't like how Nehemiah was doing it. Whatever their reason, you can be sure they later regretted it because they stand in infamy as the only people mentioned in this chapter who *did not* join in the work.

What was the consequence for the Nobles? Their reputation.....they lost the respect of the entire Jewish community. They left a negative legacy for the following generations.

Men of Tekoa (v. 27)? Considered to be (Jewish) outsiders, the Tekoites weren't satisfied with the significant work they did before - they went on to do even more work. They were not going to let the bad example of their nobles, who did no work, keep them from working above and beyond the call of duty as they took on another section of the wall to repair..

Application: God has given different work assignments to believers today. He has equipped us with various gifts and abilities appropriate to our calling, and He knows who is not really involved and who is doing double duty. "Each man's work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work." (1 Corinthians. 3:13).¹

Other outsiders are listed in vv. 13 – 19. What was the value of getting outsiders to work on the wall?

Inclusion gives them a sense of ownership and pride. Builds community -- eliminates divisiveness, i.e., no "us vs. them" mentality is allowed to develop.

Men whose homes were outside of Jerusalem—in Jericho (v. 2), Tekoa (vv. 5, 27), Gibeon (v. 7), and Mizpah (v. 7)—were assigned to sections of the wall where there were few homes. Those workers were asked to complete tasks that would not be as conveniently handled by the permanent residents in Jerusalem.²

Four times in Nehemiah 3, it speaks of those who were assigned to work on the section of the wall right in front of their house (vv. 21, 23–24, 26, 28–30). Why was that an important leadership move by Nehemiah?

- People who were assigned to sections of the wall near their homes would be more personally involved and consequently more highly motivated and would take pride in their work.
- Second, they would not have to travel to another part of the city to do the job, wasting valuable time.
- Third, in case of attack they would not be tempted to leave their posts, but would stay and protect their families.
- Fourth, the whole task would be a family effort, utilizing all available talent.³

Nehemiah made sure he injected God's presence into the project. He reminded them of God's role. He recognized the need to get people thinking of the spiritual aspect of what they were doing. He knew where to start.....he began with the spiritual aspect of the work (the high priest's work is mentioned first) and by consecrating everything to God. This was not just a building project....it was a restoration project. It could not be done in their own strength.

¹ William MacDonald, *Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*, ed. Arthur Farstad (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 484–485.

² Gene A. Getz, "Nehemiah," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*: J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 678.

³ Ibid.