

Their Nobles Put Not Their Necks to the Work +++

Nehemiah 3:4 – 27

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~ This fast-paced world in which we live is constantly changing. Everyone is looking for the next best thing; and entire industries base their operating models on the belief that their products are sleeker, faster, more technologically advanced, and have more bells and whistles than last years – or last months model! The changes that have occurred in just the last few years concerning communication, information, transportation, computers and gadgetry, in general, has now become utterly impossible to “*keep up with.*” The ever-growing demand for change, however, has deep and devastating effects on society and on our churches. Thankfully, Nehemiah is going to tell the Christian how they are to respond appropriately to a literal madhouse of endless change in this report from our Spiritual Safari.

In our last report, we began a tour through the gates of Jerusalem. There are ten gates; and we examined two of them. If you have not read our last report, I suggest you go back and do so now. We began at the sheep gate, which speaks of the cross of Christ; because the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ is the only place we can ever begin with God. God meets the world there – and there only – and unless we begin there, we just don’t begin with God. Jesus made it more than clear when He said, “*I am the way, the truth and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by Me.*” Well, once that meeting takes place — at the sheep gate, *then* God can begin to talk to us about other things.

After the sheep gate, we arrive at the fish gate. Jesus said, “*I will make you fishers of men.*” There are many different ways of fishing for fish; and there are many different ways of fishing for men. We saw all of that in our last report; and we carefully examined how this principle speaks of the Word of God as it goes out to the entire world.

⁴ And next unto them repaired Meremoth the son of Urijah, the son of Koz. And next unto them repaired Meshullam the son of Berechiah, the

son of Meshezabeel. And next unto them repaired Zadok the son of Baana.

~ That brings us to a verse full of people that didn't repair a gate, but did repair stretches of the wall itself. Candidly, this verse is an extreme exercise in pronunciation; and I don't think we can be overly dogmatic about how we are to pronounce the names in the Bible. There are some good Bibles that have self-pronouncing names – and if you can get one, it will be of help. Either way, these individuals are known only to God; but they're going to be rewarded someday — because they returned from the Babylonian captivity of their own free-will and accord, and they took up the work of the Lord by their own volition. However, we have a very troubling verse that comes next....

⁵ And next unto them the Tekoites repaired; but their nobles put not their necks to the work of their Lord.

~ Apparently, these “nobles” thought they were too good for some old-fashioned labor. Maybe they had an excuse – we're not told – but we are told their backs weren't in the work. Maybe lifting those heavy stones were just too much for them; and if you have ever seen the stones in Jerusalem, you'll know they are very large and probably weigh several tons each. Actually, I marvel at the individuals and manpower it must have taken just to move the stones. I also have a little sympathy for the “nobles” of the Tekoites; because there must have been a lot of grunting and groaning going on – and a lot of sore necks and sore hands and sore feet – and sore all over everything; but – I still think they should have put their necks to the work. The bottom line is: they fell down on the job. Unfortunately, they were right next to the fish gate, and they should have been a much better witness for God. They failed God in that respect – and how tragic it really is.

It's also worth noting that the prophet Amos was from Tekoah; but Amos *did* put his neck to the work in his day and in his calling. I don't know about you, but I would not want to be listed in the Book of Life with this group who failed God. I don't want to be the man who didn't do what the Lord called me to do. We have a lot of people right now in our churches who are not doing what God has called them to do. Maybe you need to make an

inventory of your own life at this point? Remember, we're not talking about salvation at this time – I'll go along: these people were saved – but they were lazy, and they had no reward in Heaven because of that. We have too many people who aren't doing anything worthwhile in the service of the Lord. Most of them call themselves "missionaries" – but I always have to wonder where their mission is supposed to go. Now, I understand there are local needs for "missionaries," but it still requires putting your neck to the work, my beloved.

Proverbs 11:²⁶ *He that withholdeth corn, the people shall curse him: but blessing shall be upon the head of him that selleth it ~*

The "corn" speaks symbolically of the Word of God in Scripture; and, my friends, it is a terrible and awful thing to hold back the Word of God – because we *WILL* be cursed for doing so. Have you ever stopped and considered all of these truths? Read the verse from Proverbs again. In eternity, there will be people who rise up and call the man that did *NOT* withhold corn blessed; and there are going to be people who will rise up in hell and curse many who are in Heaven. I *PROMISE* you that will be a frightful legacy to bear forevermore.

If you aren't teaching the Word of God properly, correctly, and in an educated manner, then I have bad news for you: *YOU* are withholding corn and you are starving and depriving people who are very hungry. If you're going to be in God's will for your life, you're going to be involved in a movement that is getting out the Word of God to the entire world. It simply cannot be otherwise; and, further, not a single one of us can do it on our own. We need a lot of help. Is your neck to the work? Just be honest with yourself....

⁶ Moreover the old gate repaired Jehoiada the son of Paseah, and Meshullam the son of Besodeiah; they laid the beams thereof, and set up the doors thereof, and the locks thereof, and the bars thereof.

~ So, that brings us to the old gate; and, if you have ever visited Jerusalem, you'll have a hard time figuring out which gate this is, I assure you – because they *ALL* look very old – and they *ARE* all old. Well, this is one gate

that had been there from the very beginning when David built the city. Jeremiah said, “... *thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein.*”

All we seem to be interested in today are new things. Everyone wants a new car, a new house, new clothes, they want to travel somewhere new, and have the latest new gadgets in their hands. Churches remodel the sanctuary and renovate the rest every year. By modern standards, I am severely outdated. Well, it doesn't make any difference to me, but it does make all the difference in the world to many people in their vanity.

We claim a new and higher morality in our modern world; the problem is: our so-called new morality isn't new. In fact, the new morality wasn't even new in Noah's day. The constant search for something new is the primary cause of all frustration in life. Constantly seeking some new something is a type of selfish, self-centered, perverted vanity that leads *ALL* of its victims to a dead-end street; where it rapes them and kills them. I know that's not nice – I didn't mean for it to be. Vanity Fair chasers end up having no purpose in life whatsoever.

Jesus said, “*come unto Me all you who are burdened and heavy laden and I will give you rest.*” He also said, “*take My yoke upon you and learn of Me for I am meek and lowly.*” Christ is the only place we are *EVER* going to find rest for our soul, my friend. People today are running from one psychologist to another — trading one prescription for the next — and mixing them with an internet self-diagnosis and supplemental self-medication. The problem is that the human heart needs more than an electronic, mechanical, self-serving and self-righteous sedation in philosophy and theory for a push-button age. What we need to do is what Jeremiah said to do – ask for the old path. Now, I know this teaching isn't popular, because it requires effort and discipline. Those two prerequisites are why the Word of God is not popular. If we want to find rest for our souls, it will only be found in one place – the old gate....

⁷ And next unto them repaired Melatiah the Gibeonite, and Jadon the Meronothite, the men of Gibeon, and of Mizpah, unto the throne of the governor on this side the river.

⁸ Next unto him repaired Uzziel the son of Harhaiah, of the goldsmiths. Next unto him also repaired Hananiah the son of one of the apothecaries, and they fortified Jerusalem unto the broad wall.

~ Here, we have an unusual group — because neither goldsmiths or apothecaries typically involve themselves in heavy infrastructure construction projects. Of course, goldsmiths sit at a bench and work with pieces that don't weigh more than a few grams. Handling a five-ton boulder wasn't familiar to them. I'm sure it was excruciatingly difficult for the goldsmiths; but they did it – and they *did* put their necks to the work! See, friends, there just happen to be some people making real sacrifices in the work of the Lord today – and it's *VERY* hard for them and on them – but God takes note of them, you may be sure of that. They will have a great reward.

Also, note the apothecaries in verse eight; those are pharmacists. They deal in medicine. Well, there they are out there working with these monster stones, too. God took note of them, also – and here we have their record. Some of us aren't used to what we have been commissioned to do in the Lord's work – and it can be *VERY* difficult work – but we do it *BECAUSE WE LOVE THE LORD JESUS!* Actually, some of us are literally killing ourselves serving the Lord. Quite frankly, it would be better for me to just fall over dead as opposed to continue this Spiritual Safari. I seriously doubt *ANY* of you dear readers understand what I am going through in my life to write these reports and just give them away. Further, I doubt most people even care. Well, I have tried to slow down, but I have been called to do something – and, my friend – I plan on doing it the best I possibly can. I sure hope those of you who say you are praying for me are really praying for me; because I may not be around much longer if you aren't....

⁹ And next unto them repaired Rephaiah the son of Hur, the ruler of the half part of Jerusalem.

10 And next unto them repaired Jedaiah the son of Harumaph, even over against his house. And next unto him repaired Hattush the son of Hashabniah.

11 Malchijah the son of Harim, and Hashub the son of Pahathmoab, repaired the other piece, and the tower of the furnaces.

12 And next unto him repaired Shallum the son of Haloresh, the ruler of the half part of Jerusalem, he and his daughters.

~ So, the women's liberation movement was already around at the time in which we are studying. These women were the daughters of the man who ruled half of Jerusalem. If a woman wants to do a man's work, I have no problem with that – *IF* – IF they are going to put their necks to the work — and do it right. I think these women found freedom in getting out and doing the work of the Lord. I do not believe in women preachers; but – I also know that many times there is not a man to replace them. All I can do is pray the Lord will send a man to replace any female preacher – and maybe she will get a husband at the same time. Call me old-fashioned – but, that's what's real....

13 The valley gate repaired Hanun, and the inhabitants of Zanoah; they built it, and set up the doors thereof, the locks thereof, and the bars thereof, and a thousand cubits on the wall unto the dung gate.

~ Now, when one departs from the city of Jerusalem, irrespective of which side they exit, they'll go down into a valley. The valley gate is the access through which *MANY* of us are called. All I can picture is the valley of the shadow of death at this point. We're all walking through it today; from the moment we start out in life, we walk down a canyon that becomes narrower and narrower until the Lord Himself calls us home through this gate. It is a gate of humility and humbleness. God will lead us through trials and chastisement; so we can actually learn something. Only a properly understood faith can develop virtue in us; and one of those virtues is lowliness of mind.

Paul called lowliness of mind “*humbleness of mind*” when he wrote to the Colossians; and it is something we can’t cultivate on our own. It *MUST* come from the inside — and it is also one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit. If you’re trying to be humble — and if you think you have, at last, succeeded — then you must certainly be very proud of that fact. Of course, that light reveals our spiritual blindness. We have to be humbled by the Spirit of God — there is no other way.

There was a man who went into the pulpit for the very first time; but he didn’t think he needed too much preparation. It seemed so easy to write one out on paper in an office. He found out that delivery was another matter. Well, he became frightened from the start when he looked out at that crowd, and immediately forgot everything he ever knew about God. He left the pulpit at the close of the sermon in dire shame and humiliation. There was a dear little lady who had watched his sermon; and she stopped him on the way out and said to him, “.... *young man, if you had gone up into the pulpit the way you came down from the pulpit, then you would have come down from the pulpit the way you went up!*” Don’t think for a moment that God will not school us in humility; and, sooner or later — we’re going through that gate....

¹⁴ But the dung gate repaired Malchiah the son of Rechab, the ruler of part of Bethhaccerem; he built it, and set up the doors thereof, the locks thereof, and the bars thereof.

~ The dung gate, obviously, was not a pleasant place to work. The dung gate is the route one enters to the Wailing Wall today, too, by the way. It was not in that location in the time in which we are studying; it was, apparently, on the other side of the city — where it would have flowed out and into the valley of Gehenna. Either way, this is where the filth and garbage was taken out of Jerusalem. In our modern Christian lives, the garbage will accumulate. Paul said to the Corinthians, “.... *having, therefore, these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and perfect our holiness in the fear of God.*”

You and I will have to recognize we must confess our sins daily. That’s what it means to get the garbage out of our lives. If we confess our sins, Christ is

faithful and just to forgive us those sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we *DON'T* confess our sins every day, then the putrid septic tank of life overflows and breaks and, believe me, we will stink and make other people vomit....

15 But the gate of the fountain repaired Shallun the son of Colhozeh, the ruler of part of Mizpah; he built it, and covered it, and set up the doors thereof, the locks thereof, and the bars thereof, and the wall of the pool of Siloah by the king's garden, and unto the stairs that go down from the city of David.

~ I believe the gate of the fountain refers to what the Lord Jesus said to the woman at the well in Samaria, *"whosoever drinketh of the water that I give them shall never thirst. But the water that I shall give them shall be in them a well of water springing up into everlasting life."* Then, at the Feast of Tabernacles, Jesus stood up and said, *"he that believeth on Me, as the Scripture saith, out of his belly and innermost being shall flow rivers of living water."* John explains this figure, too, when he said, *".... this spake He of the Spirit which they that believe on Him should receive!"*

Romans 8:9Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his
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The gate of the fountain teaches that every believer who has trusted Christ is indwelt by the Spirit of God, and that we need a constant flowing of the Spirit of God in our life. When we are filled with His Spirit, it isn't just a well with a bucket — but a fountain of living and flowing water that springs forth. When we arrive at this place, the water of the Word of God will gush out uncontrollably; and we will be a blessing to many other people who are very thirsty. That's what every believer should be and, if it isn't what you are, then there is something radically wrong in your walk with the Lord Jesus Christ....

16 After him repaired Nehemiah the son of Azbuk, the ruler of the half part of Bethzur, unto the place over against the sepulchres of David, and to the pool that was made, and unto the house of the mighty.

17 After him repaired the Levites, Rehum the son of Bani. Next unto him repaired Hashabiah, the ruler of the half part of Keilah, in his part.

18 After him repaired their brethren, Bavai the son of Henadad, the ruler of the half part of Keilah.

19 And next to him repaired Ezer the son of Jeshua, the ruler of Mizpah, another piece over against the going up to the armoury at the turning of the wall.

20 After him Baruch the son of Zabbai earnestly repaired the other piece, from the turning of the wall unto the door of the house of Eliashib the high priest.

21 After him repaired Meremoth the son of Urijah the son of Koz another piece, from the door of the house of Eliashib even to the end of the house of Eliashib.

22 And after him repaired the priests, the men of the plain.

23 After him repaired Benjamin and Hashub over against their house. After him repaired Azariah the son of Maaseiah the son of Ananiah by his house.

24 After him repaired Binnui the son of Henadad another piece, from the house of Azariah unto the turning of the wall, even unto the corner.

25 Palal the son of Uzai, over against the turning of the wall, and the tower which lieth out from the king's high house, that was by the court of the prison. After him Pedaiah the son of Parosh.

26 Moreover the Nethinims dwelt in Ophel, unto the place over against the water gate toward the east, and the tower that lieth out.

27 After them the Tekoites repaired another piece, over against the great tower that lieth out, even unto the wall of Ophel.

~ So, our Spiritual Safari will conclude this leg of our expedition at the water gate. We'll have to continue through the gates in our next report, because we haven't quite finished visiting all of them. Of course, the water gate is where water was brought into the city. Some water came in by aqueduct – but not all of it. Once again, the water gate speaks of the Word of God. This is where we're going to see Ezra construct his pulpit later on in this Book of Nehemiah, too.

It is appropriate Ezra will read from the Word of God. The symbolism is no accident. The New Testament makes it clear that water always represents the Word of God in the Bible. Jesus said to His own in the upper room, *"now are ye clean through the word by which I have spoken unto you."* Our safari expedition is trying to go through the water gate today, friends. There is only *ONE* purpose for what I am doing: to take the entire Word of God to the entire world in the sound doctrine of the apostles. What we need are more who are willing to help get the water to a very thirsty world....

John 15:³ *Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you*
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John 17:¹⁷ *Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth* ~

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