

Nehemiah 2:- Last week we looked at the first two chapters of the Book of Nehemiah. Chapter 3 is a record of the families and individuals who worked at rebuilding the gates and walls of Jerusalem.

Problems from outside and within :- Read Nehemiah chapter 4. Remember that under the “ethnic cleansing policy” of Babylon, peoples and tribes were moved from their homelands and resettled elsewhere. The land formerly occupied by Judah and Israel (Southern and Northern Kingdoms) was now under the control of their traditional enemies – verses 1 – 3 and 7 – 8. any attack on the Jews in Jerusalem would have to be secret because of the favourable decree of Artaxerxes.

In this situation Nehemiah and the people turn again to prayer – verses 4 – 5 and 9.

In the few words of verse 10 we get a picture of a disheartened group of workers! Looking at the immensity of the task, the mounds of rubble and burnt stone they had to clear before they could even start to build, the people said “it is impossible! It can’t be done!”.

That Nehemiah had the strength of character and vision to encourage and enthuse his countrymen says much about his spiritual walk with the Lord God.

At the same time as the workers were demoralised and complaining, news kept coming in of an imminent attack on the city – verses 11 – 12. It would seem that some of the Jews were living in villages near Jerusalem, rather than in the city itself. Maybe the menfolk were coming in each day to help with the building, leaving their homes and families vulnerable to attack. Verses 13 – 14 along with verse 22 reads as though Nehemiah brought these families within the city area and armed them to protect themselves and the city. The organisation of the guards and workers must have been well thought through. Do not miss the importance of the last phrase of verse 16:- “and the leaders stood behind all the house of Judah”. People will respond to good leadership if they have confidence in them.

In all this Nehemiah himself was the driving force, depending on an inner strength from God fortified by continuous prayer.

Read Nehemiah chapter 5. A shortage of food was causing problems within the Jewish community. There has always been a group of those who take advantage in a crisis! The moneylenders were charging extortionate rates of interest on loans. When the debtors were unable to pay, they had to sell property and even their children to cover the cost.

Again Nehemiah shows his leadership qualities by taking the accusation to a general assembly rather than trying to sort it out himself! He himself set an example of sacrificial living – verses 14 -18.

The wall is finished:- Read Nehemiah chapter 6. In spite of opposition from enemies around, and pressure from ‘false prophets’ within his own community, Nehemiah remained steadfast in his service to the Lord God and His people.

The rebuilding of the material defences of the City of God was completed. However, there were a number of moral difficulties still to be faced. It may be that it is easier to deal with difficulties regarding buildings than it is to deal with problems regarding personalities and individuals! So often we hold back from decisions afraid of causing offence! It seems that Nehemiah in his close walk with the Lord had the courage and God given wisdom to do both!

You will have your own thoughts and subjects for prayer as you study Bible readings like these from Nehemiah. Just one thought comes to mind:- In reading and thinking about Nehemiah chapter 5, I am led to pray for wisdom for those in authority as the world comes out of “lock-down”. It will be very difficult to make sure that those who have lost their jobs, or who have had to take reductions in income get a fair deal! We need leaders with the wisdom and ability of Nehemiah to ensure a new and better world in the days ahead.