

COME LET US BUILD

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INTRODUCTION

The children of Israel spent seventy years of captivity in the country of Babylon and returned to Jerusalem during the reign of king Cyrus (2 Chro.36: 22; Ezra 1:1-11). When they returned they found that the city of Jerusalem and its gates were burnt and the walls were broken down. This news concerning the condition of Jerusalem was brought to Nehemiah by certain Jews (Neh.1: 2-3). When he heard about the condition of Jerusalem and the people of God, he started to pray with tears and fasting. He began to remind God of His promise made to the children of Israel (Lev.26: 40-45). To begin with he confessed his own sins, the sins of his father's house and the sins of the people of God.

The condition of many believers these days is very similar, to that of the children of Israel in the days of Nehemiah. There is a sad barrenness among them because they have not given the proper place to God, His Word, and His house in their lives (1 Cor.3: 1-6). Only when we humble ourselves and turn to God, with true repentance, and honor Him wholeheartedly can we obtain His rich blessing. When we tremble before God and confess our sins, God hears our prayers and forgives us of our sins and blesses us. Believing in God's promise the 2Chro.7: 14, Nehemiah started to pray with mourning and fasting for certain days. The same principle applies to believe also. Only when they humble themselves, confess their sins and pray to God, can they recover their first love for Him. Then God also starts working in them by pouring out upon them the spirit of prayer and intercession (Neh.1: 5-8). Thus we see that only by humbling ourselves and confessing our faults and fully fruitful. Once more we obtain God's blessings, which we had enjoyed initially.

Chapter one: Strengthen your hands

(a) PREPARATION OF THE LEADER

At first God started working in the life of Nehemiah and through him many others were stirred up for God's work. In the history of God's people we can see how again and again God raised up a faithful servant or a small remnant of His people to restart His work. Lord always performed great things for His people because of the faithfulness of the few. God desires each one of us be a part of the remnant through whose faithfulness and intercession He plans to work out His divine purpose and plan.

Nehemiah was very sad because the city of Jerusalem was lying waste and the gates were consumed with fire (Neh.2: 3). In the same way those who are deeply concerned about the work of God cannot help but feel sad when they see the lean and spiritual anemic condition in the lives of God's people. These days in many parts of the world we find among believers nothing but leanness and spiritual infancy. According to God's promises, His great power is at our disposal our lives can be abundantly fruitful if we are concerned about the sad condition to do according to His desire (John 14:12; Rev.1: 18). We have a living Savior who is the same yesterday, today and forever (Heb.13:8). When we fail to obey God's word fully, our lives become barren and we pile up failures, defeats and spiritual infancy into our experiences.

When the children of Israel were in Babylon there seemed to be no hope whatsoever of their returning to Jerusalem, because they were captives and also few in number, but God kept the promise He made to His servant Jeremiah. Thus through a heathen king named Cyrus they were given a chance to return (2 Chro.36: 22). After the proclamation was made by king Cyrus, they started to return to Jerusalem. They could finally see God's prophecy being fulfilled on their behalf. Things that were impossible had become possible.

(b) TRUSTING AND OBEYING

Even though king Cyrus made an open proclamation that all the Jews who desired to return could do so, yet many stayed back because they were not willing to believe. In the same way if we also fail to believe and claim God's promises, He cannot work in us and through us. As believers we should keep our belief in God's promises very firm, and claim them for solving our needs. There are many who say they believe in the Bible and yet they do not comply to what it says. They are more inclined to follow man made customs, rituals and practices. On the one hand they profess to trust God, but on the other hand they are in need of money, they start begging. It is amusing that some people conduct healing campaigns and they say that they trust God to do healing on their behalf. Yet it is strange to note, that when it comes to the question of their finances, they do not apply the same faith, but at this point they look to man for financial assistance. The God who could heal, could He not also provide money for all their needs? They fail to follow the word of God implicitly. Only by obeying Him and His word implicitly can we see God working on our behalf. According to John 15:7 we should abide in the Lord Jesus Christ by keeping ourselves under His Lordship. By obeying Him in every step of our life. We must obey Him in all matters, only then can we see the fulfillment of His promise, namely: - "Ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you"(John 15:7). Thus Nehemiah believed and then started to obey, and God on His part also started to work on his behalf.

(c) PRAYER LIFE

Many people advertise their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ but troubles come they begin to weep. They give hints about their financial needs to other people in many subtle ways, sometimes even in their prayers they pray loudly. But in the case of Nehemiah we do not find anything of that sort. He did not make any request to the king even though he was the foremost among his servants, and had every opportunity for getting any of his petitions granted. Instead, he first prayed to God of heavens before he could express his request to his earthly king. He prayed that God would grant him wisdom to make his request in a proper way. Thus he depended upon God for each word that had to be spoken by him before the king, as a result of this when he made the request before the king, the king could see that he was a man of God and the words of God.

Nehemiah only requested the king for permission to leave, in exactly the same manner as government employees apply for leave when they need it (Neh.2: 5), at that time he was badly in need of a large amount of money for the work, which was before him. He could have easily requested the king for financial help, and the king too, being so great could have readily helped him. But Nehemiah did not want to depend upon king's money for God's work. And we see that the king was not only pleased to grant him permission to go to Jerusalem (Verse 6), but he also sent with him captains of his army and bands of horsemen for his protection on the way (Verse 9). Thus we see that when we go upon our knees with any burden, we not only have the privilege to be led and governed by Him, but also find every provision being made for our safety and success. So Nehemiah reached Jerusalem ready for the task before him.

Chapter Two: Striving Together

(a) SURVEYING THE CONDITIONS

Before Nehemiah started building the broken wall, he went around to see how they were broken down and how the gates were consumed with fire. Before we rebuild the house of God, first, we must find out the cause of barrenness.

These days in many places we find believers and Christian leaders praying for revival and awakening among God's people, without being sufficiently concerned to know the cause for their barrenness. Only by using some customary phrases in prayers such as " we have sinned" and so on, we cannot see God working in the midst of His people. They think that they have achieved their objective by praying and forgetting all about it. Just as a patient cannot be cured if goes to the doctor and does nothing more than simply announcing to him that he is not well, these believers also cannot expect revival without going beyond praying about it and doing nothing more. Unless the patient tells the doctor the details of his troubles the doctor cannot examine him, or diagnose his disease and give him the right treatment. The condition of the walls of Jerusalem was due to the sins of the children of Israel. This had not been faced frankly. For many years God out of His love went on warning them through His prophets, but they continue to disobey God with rude indifference to His warnings. After giving them a sufficient chance, God sent Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and destroyed their city, broke down the walls and burnt the gates.

These days also we can find similar situations; there is barrenness among believers, because they insist on following man made customs, practices, rituals and ceremonies rather than obeying His word. They fail to diagnose this as the root of the trouble.

When a man wants to build a strong building first of all he has to lay strong foundation. In the spiritual sense we see that our Lord also had said that if we build our house upon a rock it will not fall by the wind, storm or floods. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself is our rock. We have to build upon Him who is the rock; that our procedure for building had to be according to His teachings, His instructions, His heavenly will, His heavenly plan, His heavenly wisdom and heavenly power. In Eph. 2:20 we read " And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone". That is how we believers have to build a spiritual house on a strong spiritual foundation. Many people forget this first law and try to build God's house on sand, on things, which have no support from God. That is why we see everything is falling into pieces, God is giving us a very solemn warning in Heb 12:26, that He is going to shake all that is of man-made origin and practice, manmade denominations and so on. Hence whatever we do it had to be based on God's word, if we want our work to bear fruit and withstand the test of opposing forces.

(b) FACING THE CONDITIONS

When Nehemiah found the condition of the city in a very sorrowful state he informed others also (vs.17). Many came forward to help when the work began. He also told them that God's hand was upon him (vs.18). Even these days we need men like Nehemiah about whom people should be able to say, "Truly God's hand is upon this man". When people saw that God's hand was upon Nehemiah they also joined in the work of God. But when Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite and Geshem the Arabian heard about it they laughed, and scorned and despised them. Thus we find that when we want take any share in the work of God, we are bound to be ridiculed and opposed by the enemies of God. That is the first weapon, which the devil uses to discourage and frighten us. During Nehemiah's time these three were the most influential men of the city. We come across men like Sanballat and Tobiah in every country who powerfully oppose the work of God. Such people very successfully hinder us from following the Lord if we do not pray sufficiently for God's strength. If we take up any work for Him they only make fun of us to discourage us. Nehemiah overcame all these obstacles through prayer. He did not take notice of their railing, but kept his mind fixed on God. That is why he was able to say with great confidence, " The God of heaven will prosper us; therefore we His servants will arise and build "(vs.20). Those who are not born again and are worldly-minded appear to be very clever but they have no part in the work of God because they have not been called by Him. Many people obey God, but when difficulties come they place more trust in seeking the favor of rich people rather than trusting in God. God's people should not depend on ungodly and worldly people under any circumstances. By the help of prayer and complete obedience to God we can very definitely defeat the enemy, who tries to obstruct and frighten us when we take a bold stand for the work of God. Thus by depending upon God through prayer Nehemiah not only withstood the opposition of the enemy but defeated him also.

We have seen from God's word how our spiritual barrenness can be overcome only by being obedient to God's word. The broken walls of Jerusalem and the burnt gates point to the present deteriorated condition of God's people in the whole world.

God sent many prophets to warn the children of Israel. But they did not take heed or obey God's word fully, but kept on rebelling against him until He had to punish them. According to His warning before hand He made king Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon capture Jerusalem and take all the people away as captives. The walls of Jerusalem were broken down and the gates were burnt. God told them through His prophets that after seventy years He would bring them back to Jerusalem and that is what He did. Then they rebuilt the broken walls and the burnt gates thus becoming co-workers with God. In the same way we who are believers also become co-workers with the Lord Jesus Christ as soon as God reconciles us to Himself through our Lord Jesus Christ, just as he did in the case of the children of Israel after seventy years of captivity.

Among the many names given to us as believers, one is "Laborers together with God"(1 Cor 3:9). The same is found in 2 Cor.6: 1 "We then, as workers together with Him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain". If God had so desired he could have used other people to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem or He could have used the same king Cyrus to send his armies with materials to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem or God could have used the king Artaxerxes and his men to rebuild it in a very short time. But He did none of that because He wanted to reserve that privilege and responsibility exclusively for God's people. Only those who are truly born again and have received the gift of eternal life have this privilege to take part in building God's house.

However we are not saved to build a denomination or a group. We are called by His name to build God's habitation, God's dwelling place, a heavenly house. According to Eph.2: 22, we are brought together as believers to become God's everlasting habitation, God's temple. This temple is not made of bricks, stones, mud or wood. It is an everlasting spiritual habitation, and the privilege and honor in building it is miles out of the reach of the worldly people. This privilege is not even given to angels, but it is given exclusively to those who are purchased by the precious blood our Lord Jesus Christ.

(a) OVERCOMING THE CONDITIONS

1. Taking strength in the Lord:

After Nehemiah had come to Jerusalem and seen the conditions of the broken walls and the burnt gates of the city he went and told other people also about it and got for rebuilding. Nehemiah knew that it was God who sent him there and that he would open the way for His work. Hence he had faith that God would help him without fail. He unhesitatingly went ahead and divided the work among the people in such a way that all could take part in the difficult task. The walls of Jerusalem were very thick and high and required workers who were well experienced and well trained. The walls were now in such a bad condition that it was a very difficult task to rebuild them. In the same way when we see the barren condition of the people today and begin to consider how we can make the condition of the people better, it may appear altogether impossible. So many people discouragingly say, "We should not be bothered about the condition of the people. After all we are not living in the days of Apostles". Others think that they should go on and work according to the times. But God is not happy about such a condition of His people. If we are willing to follow Him, He will give you extra strength and grace. We should not forget that with all our human limitations and handicaps God can wonderfully use us if we are willing to trust and obey Him.

2. Willingness to work:

Nehemiah divided the whole wall into different sections according to divine order. No one complained or refused that he should be given a particular corner or portion of the wall according to his liking. Some people like to select work according to their fancy and say they can do only some particular job and not other jobs. For instance during the Holy Convocations some people say that they can only wash vessels and cannot do other jobs. We find even among God's servants many who want to serve God according to their own likings and thus refuse to fit into God's plan and order. For example if they have many children they want to be in a place where there are good schools, nice houses to live and so on. They are not happy to go wherever God sends them. They want to remain where their wives want them. Some wives can steer their husband's minds very easily. Someone reminded a wife that the husband is the head of the house. To this she replied she believed that the husband is the head, but that she was the neck, which turns the head. This is not according to God's word. That is why we read that Nehemiah divided the whole work according to God's guidance, among the people whether they are rich or poor, young or old. He did not pay any attention to any other consideration except God's guidance. We know that God's order and plan are always the best. If there are any difficulties He Himself will give us the strength to overcome them; if there are any obstacles He Himself will remove them and if there are any impossibilities He Himself make them into possibilities. If there are any needs He Himself will supply them. All the people whole-heartedly got busy and went on building the section of the walls that was allotted to them. They went on working joyfully and faithfully. None of them murmured or said, "I can not do this work". For example we see in Neh.3: 3 that every job undertaken by them was thoroughly done by them.

This is a great secret for believer's life. Whatever we do we should do all things heartily as unto Him (Col.3: 23). As believers of the Lord Jesus Christ whatever job is given unto us at home or outside we should not fail to do it heartily.

In a certain hospital there was a nurse who was a believer and she was very conscientious in her work. After some time she was put on duty in a new ward, and there also, as usual she began to attend to her duties heartily and thoroughly, and kept everything in the ward perfectly and clean. On seeing this one patient questioned her as to who was coming to inspect the ward. She replied "No one". The patient continued to ask her, why then was she working so hard. She remarked that the nurse who had worked in that ward prior to her coming had not been so faithful and thorough in her duties. To this the nurse replied that she was not working to please any human being, but to please only the Lord Jesus Christ who was her Savior.

We must learn to willingly accept any kind of job, which the Lord may entrust to us. When I gave myself for the Lord's service in the year 1932, I promised the Lord that I would make no choice regarding the type of work, food, climatic conditions or anything else and that I was prepared to go wherever He would send me. I believed that He would not leave me alone and that was sufficient for me. He goes before us, behind us, and with us and gives us strength for any kind of work, which we may undertake to complete, as long as it is according to His perfect will and plan.

In the rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem, among those who came to help Nehemiah there were some who were not qualified as carpenters or masons, but

they accepted the work only because it was from God. As a result of it God Himself gave them skill and knowledge that were necessary for this work. On the other hand there were some who did not do the work heartily. We can see from Nehemiah 3:5, although the noble did not actually refuse to work, yet they did not work heartily.

During our Holy Convocation gatherings when we ask for volunteers to attend to various jobs, some came forward to work very happily for the first few days, but as the days go by they lose interest forgetting the fact that we should take our full share in any work which is entrusted to us in the House of God.

3. Joy in sharing the work:

In the third chapter of this book of Nehemiah, we find that every one was given some important task to be done irrespective of their status, whether they were priests, nobles, merchants or goldsmiths (vs.8, 31,32). Although Shallum the son of Halohesh was the ruler of the half part of Jerusalem (vs.12) yet he and his daughters came forward to do their share of the work. The High Priest Eliaship and his brethren took a leading part in the work of the Lord (vs.1).

These days we find among servants of God, that most of them do not want to take up any strenuous or hard work, they expect special consideration and regard to be shown to them as if they are in some way superior to different from others. We all should take some share in the work of God no matter who you are and from what background we come. The lesson we have to learn here is willingness to serve Him and remain in divine order in the house of God we cannot make our own choices but we have to do only God's will, His command and His plan should be our aim. If the people had not obeyed Nehemiah, the walls of Jerusalem would not have been built. Because of their obedience to his leadership in spite of the enemies they move ahead working till they had finally completed the work. This became possible for Nehemiah only as the people did not bother him with requests for special concession or considerations to be given to them.

The Lord Jesus is our heavenly Nehemiah. He has the perfect plan for building the New Jerusalem. If we all follow God's order and plan in His house, and remain under the headship of our Lord Jesus Christ and do everything as unto Him, then only we will have the honor to see life flowing through us to different parts of the world as we go about toiling as His co-laborers. The Lord keeps a record of what we are doing and how we are doing it. Let us learn to use the secret of taking part whole-heartedly in God's work according to His plan and order. Then we will be surprised to notice how God will supply extra strength, grace and wisdom for whatever work we are undertaking to do. We will also enjoy spiritual oneness and love among ourselves (John 13:35).

4. Praying the enemies away:

We have already seen how the broken walls and the burnt gates of Jerusalem speak of the barren lives of many of God's people all over the world. We have also seen how this was the result of the rebellion and sin of the children of Israel. Even these days, we can see much bareness among God's people on account of their sin and disobedience to God. But the God of grace always used a remnant to bring new life among His people so that they may enjoy His salvation fully. God used Nehemiah and his co-workers to build the broken walls and the burnt gates of Jerusalem. Those who wanted to obey God and become a part of this remnant, had to be prepared for

any kind of opposition, ridicule or mockery, just as Nehemiah and his helpers had to face and overcome much opposition and persecution. Sanballat was the chief mocker and persecutor (4:1). He had another companion by name Tobiah (vs.3). These men Sanballat and Tobiah were most powerful and influential men of the place. We as God's servants will also face opposition from the powerful and influential people, the so-called Christian leaders.

In the year 1941 we faced opposition from the leading men of Different denominations in the city of Madras, Sanballat and Tobiah could have used their high position to the advantage of the building the wall of Jerusalem but on the contrary they utilized their privileged position to hinder God's work and become enemies to His servants. Paul says in Phil.2: 21, "For all seek their own". At the very beginning of the Lord's work in Madras He warned us and taught us how to face such type of opposition. So before we moved into "Jehova –Shamma" in Madras a few of us were burdened to pray all night. We knew before hand, that we would have to face much persecution from the enemy. At the same time we knew that we prayed with perseverance we would not be able to stand the opposition. So we decided to go to a nearby hill in a place called Pallavaram to spend the whole night in prayer. We are about 25 to 30 in number. When we went there, we found on the hill many old tombs and the place was full of scorpions and centipedes, after spending some time with whole night in prayer. These scorpions and centipedes were attracted by the bright Petromax lights, which we had taken with us. We went on killing them as we saw them approaching. It was an unusual experience, because on the one and we were praying and on the other hand we were killing the scorpions and the centipedes. Early in the morning we could see the sun rising on the city of Madras. Then the Lord spoke to us in a clear and open way that we would have to face such bitter opposition and persecution from the people that it would be as painful and poisonous as the sting of the scorpions and centipedes. The Lord also encouraged us saying not to be afraid of them because even though these people may try to harm us, they would not be able to succeed, for as we were able to overcome the scorpions and the centipedes so we will also be able to overcome those who will persecute and oppose us. What the Lord spoke through the scorpions and the centipedes turned out to be true as we experienced in the years that followed. So our going to prayer perseveringly proved a great help and encouragement.

We cannot overcome the enemy by our own wisdom, cleverness, talents, gifts or by our own strength and power. Now we can testify that the Lord has faithfully kept His promise during the past 31 years. The more the people tried to oppose the work of God the more we were blessed. First of all, they used weapons of mockery and ridicule as we notice in verse 1. These are very common weapons which the enemy used to hinder the work of God. The devil often uses the leading people for this purpose, hoping that mocking and ridicule from the leading men will prove more effective to harm God's work.

Sanballat and Tobiah did only hold important position in Jerusalem, but they also had plenty of money. They were so proud of their position, land, authority and money that they did not fear ridiculing those who wanted to obey and serve God. We have seen same types of things happening during the past years. Those who are in charge schools, hospitals and other institutions and were having much money were intoxicated with power in their high positions. They began to ridicule those who wanted to testify in the waters of Baptism. Saying, "Who will bury you? Who will marry you? Who will give you jobs? Who will feed you?" and so on. The devil has used the same weapon through he ages against God's servants who wanted to obey

and serve Him. But we thank and praise God for our strong and effective weapon of prayer, which is all-powerful to defeat the enemy. If we want to obey God fully we must also be prepared for facing all kinds of mockery and persecution. When Nehemiah and his helpers were attacked by the enemy they began to pray. The more they were attacked by the enemy, the more did they pray. Similarly we were not discouraged by all the attacks of the enemy, but we went on praying and seeking God's help. We have found by experience that the people who mocked us in the beginning are now begging us to come and help them, pray for them, or have gospel campaigns in their places. If we patiently bear all the mocking, in due time the Lord will help us and make us channels of blessing to those who earlier mocked us. Our duty is just to remain true to the heavenly vision and go on praying.

In verse 6 we read that they had a mind to work with oneness and unity. They progressed onward in the work as God kept showing them how to proceed. In some cases we find the enemy bringing contentions and strife among the believers to hinder the work of God. In order to maintain oneness in the spirit among ourselves we should pray much.

When Sanballat and Tobiah could not stop the work of God through mockery and reviling, they became all the more angry and began to use force. Then they began to conspire to fight against Nehemiah and his colleagues. They thought that by threatening and force they would be able to stop God's work. We also have gone through similar experience during the past many years. But also have the same weapon that is prayer to defeat the enemy (vs.9). That is why we were burdened to start "all night prayer" and other times of prayer in the assembly through travailing and persevering prayer, we were able to defeat the enemy.

The enemy can raise bitter opposition against God's people and God's servants. It is only by travailing and persevering prayer that we can very certainly defeat the attack of the enemy. We can see the Lord Jesus Himself praying for Simon Peter in Luke 22:31,32. "And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may swift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not; and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren".

5. Removing the rubbish:

Neh.4: 10, because the walls were burnt, there was much rubbish lying here and there. So to have a strong wall built they had to remove all the rubbish first. This rubbish speaks of man-made customs, traditions and practices, if we want God's work to be strong we must remove all such rubbish (Mark 7: 1-13).

In many places we have seen the heads of denominational churches ignoring God's word and clinging to man made customs, rituals and practices, which they have received from their predecessors, and not from the Word of God.

One day ten such men who appeared to be respectable and God fearing, came to me and said very politely that they quite appreciated what the Lord was doing through our meetings, but had two things against me. One was: Why was I giving second Baptism? And the other: Why we were having separate Sunday meetings while they were having their own Sunday service. I told them to kindly show me one verse or even a half a verse from the Bible where babies were baptized and also to explain to me the meaning of the word Baptism. To this one of the leading pastors how their very godly forefathers Baptized babies for many centuries,

and asked me whether they could be wrong. I told them that my grand father also was very God fearing and good man and I asked them whether I should obey the Bible or my grand father's words. They said they did not come prepared to answer any questions. So I requested them to kindly fix the day, the place and the time and invite any number of Pastors but I myself would come alone. But I put one condition that they all should bring their Bibles along so that whatever they had to say may be substantiated from the scriptures. They all agreed, fixed the place, the date and the time and promised to come. But till today they have not turned up.

Regarding the worship meeting I told them that we do not make any members and we do not collect any subscriptions, we do not go here and there inviting people to come to our meetings or attract them with some material gains like giving some milk powder. But when people come of their own accord with a desire to worship the Lord in His House, we cannot stop them. I further told them that we have a right to worship God in a way He has shown from the Bible, from which it is clear that He has forgiven our sins and has washed us in His precious Blood. I asked them to tell me whether I spoke against the Bible in any meeting.

Generally our worship meetings go on for quite a long time. One Sunday, one of the leading pastor came to our worship meeting at about one o'clock in the afternoon. Since our service went on for a long time, he went outside for few times, came back and sat in the meeting. Afterwards he told me how he came with many questions and how the Lord spoke to him and answered all his questions one by one, during the worship service. He even invited us for a gospel campaign in his place and promised to make all the arrangements.

God calls from His people some to be pastors, some to be evangelists and some other to be preachers and so on. When He calls them He also appoints them and prepare them. We have seen in some assemblies how those who are ambitious for position in the Church brought so much rubbish in the form of divisions, parties and strife. Unless this rubbish is removed God's work cannot be established according to the word of God and fulfillment of His heavenly plan.

Nehemiah 4:19, "The work is great and large and we are separated upon the wall one far from another". When the work of the Lord increases we cannot come together for fellowship as often as we would like to. This brings weakness in the assembly. This weakness gives room for the rubbish of indifference towards each other. To eliminate this difficulty we need to make an extra effort to come together for fellowship. The Holy Convocation gatherings and special meetings are arranged from time to time to help us to come together for fellowship and thus tide over the difficulty of times of separation.

Chapter three: God will prosper the work

(a) POOR YET PROSPEROUS

We have already seen that when the children of Israel started rebuilding the walls and the burnt gates of Jerusalem, they had to face much opposition from their enemies. Now we find here that they had to face problems that hinder God's work and their obedience to Him. Because of lack of love among themselves they had to face many problems. At that time there was a famine in the land. Because of resulting poverty they had to mortgage their vineyards, houses and lands (5: 3,4). There were some Jews who started taking usury or interest. As believers it is our duty to help those who are in need. If we fail to do this will be hindering God's work. As God's children we cannot beg for money or food. (Psalm 34:10; 37:25). Believers who cannot trust God and are in the habit of begging for help and money remain beggars throughout their lives. Those who are in need must learn how to pray for their needs. Those who have more than they actually need have a duty to pray and trace out those who are in need of their help. If this is complied according to God's guidance, many needs can be met and no loss can be incurred.

Some years ago, I happened to stay with a poor family who were good believers. At that time the man of the house had lost his job. One day there was no food at all in the house, not even a piece of bread. But all of them including the small children began to pray without the least murmur. They believed that God would supply their need and therefore they would have no need to beg. While we were still praying we heard a loud noise at the door. We thought that someone had struck with big stone. But when the door was opened, they found a large gunny bag containing bread, vegetables and other foodstuffs sufficient for the whole family. If we as believers start begging, God will not be pleased at us and we will continue to remain as beggars.

The first lesson the Lord taught me during the early years of my Christian life was that I should not tell anyone about my needs either by words or by hints but only the lord. There was a time when I had no food for many days, and to add to my difficulty, I had to walk long distance.

One day I was very hungry, then I thought within myself "I am very hungry". I cannot beg or ask anyone for food. If I go to my friend's house at food time, he is sure to ask me to have food with him. Then I will say, "No thank you". If he ask me once more I will once more say, "No thank you." but he ask me for the third time I will then agree to have food with him. With such thoughts I went to his house and it happened exactly as I had thought and I was able to have food in his house. After a few weeks I had a same temptation again. I was feeling very hungry and so I thought of going to my friend's house once again with the hope of repeating my last experience. As I was on my way at about 1:30 p.m. the Lord rebuked me saying, "Where is your faith?" I replied "Lord I do not intend to ask or beg for the food. Only if he insists until I refuse him two times I will take it." To this the Lord questions me saying, "What is your motive in going to your friends house." I was put to shame. I immediately asked the Lord to forgive me. I promised Him that I would not go any person for any need of my own because He is my living sufficiency (Psalm 23:1). That is how the Lord gave me a strong faith.

There was another occasion when I had to go without food for a whole day. At midnight a man came and knocked at my door and woke me up. Then he said to me, "Brother! Please forgive me for coming to you at this late hour of the night. I was asleep and had a dream. In my dream I saw someone asking me to go and call you over for food. So I woke up, went to the kitchen and found that a plate of cooked rice was left over, please tell me did you have food today?". I could not reply him with a lie. So I told him that I had no food that day. He immediately took me to his house at that midnight hour and gave me food. These things do not happen by chance. Do not say "Your case is different": if we trust God fully we can prove His faithfulness.

On yet another occasion twenty-five of us went on a Gospel campaign. At that time we were doing our own cooking. When Sunday came those of us who were responsible for the cooking wanted to say back and attend to the cooking for all of us. I told them that the Lord wanted all of us to go for the worship service. They said, "What shall we do about our midday meals?". I told them that the Lord would provide. So we all went to the worship meeting, after the meeting we were all standing at the bus stop. I saw one man who was known to me coming towards us carrying a very big basket. I asked him what was he doing. He told me that he had been to a wedding feast. Where much food was left over. The hosts said that anybody could take away the left over food. He thought since he had no family of himself, he could take the food for his neighbors and friends. But when he saw us, he felt that he should give it to us, so he left that basket full of food with us. There was good food sufficient for all of us. So God will supply all our needs as long as we do our part of trusting Him.

Early one morning when I was praying the Lord told me to visit a widow who was in great need of Rs. 5/- to her. So I got up, searched my pockets and found nothing. The Lord kept saying to me "Go and give." So I put on my coat, took my Bible and walked out with out any money with me. Strangely enough while I was going, I noticed a five-rupee note lying on the road. Picking it up I loudly announcing three times, and no one claimed it. I took the note and went to the widow's house and gave her the money. She began to weep and told me how that same night she saw her husband in her dream telling her not to worry and that Brother Bakht Singh would come and give her five rupees. She also said that the Lord had sent me just when she was thinking of me. These things do not happen by chance.

We must help the needy just as the Lord helps and guides us. We have to pray asking the Lord to show us those who are in need of food or clothes or money. That is how we can help and encourage our poor fellow believers, widows and orphans. There are many believers who have enough and more than enough money to spare for the needy, but they have no mind to share it with others. This type of self-centeredness causes their hearts to be full of murmurings, hatred and jealousy. In Acts 6:16 we read how the early church solved their problems by appointing men of honest report, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom. These days we find some people who are ambitious for power and authority desiring to become deacons and elders. Such people have no love or spiritual concerns for the poor believers. All they want is only prominence. Only those who are spiritual and are prepared by God can become shepherds. In Acts chapter 11, we see how there was famine in the whole of Judea and how the believers at Antioch sent them help through Paul and Barnabas.

When Paul and Barnabas reached Jerusalem they found the believers praying. At that time they were undergoing severe famine and persecution. Paul and

Barnabas were surprised to see them praying with faith instead of worrying over their troubles (Acts 12:5). They had taken along with them money and provisions as a relief to the needy saints at Jerusalem, but they also received something in return from them, and that was a new burden of prayer. Thus they brought great blessings to Antioch from Jerusalem (Acts 13: 1-3). It is by helping others and sharing what we have with others that we receive a heavenly vision. As believers we should learn to pray daily and specifically to find out those in need. All elders and shepherds also should learn the same spiritual secret.

In Neh. 5:14-15, Nehemiah says that he did not accept any gifts from the people for all the 12 years. He accepted no food or money even though he was a governor. From a worldly point of view it would have been perfectly alright for him to accept gifts, as others in his palace for their supply of food and wine. They worked for the sake of money, name and fame while Nehemiah worked in the fear of God.

Among God's servants also we find some who are governed by money and desires for comforts. They have a burden to visit only those homes from which they can receive gifts. If they find that their assembly is not looking after their needs they go on reducing the people in their messages saying that they do not know how to honor the Lord with their substances. Such servants of God have not learnt to trust God for their needs, and as a result they remain spiritually barren. If we serve God faithfully and depend upon Him for all our needs, without the least murmur or questioning, only then will our ministry be abundantly fruitful. Many servants of God say that they are living on faith. Many servants of God say that they are living on faith. But actually they live on the faith of others. So God's servants must receive a warning that they abstain from serving God for the sake of food, money and comfort. They should do everything only as unto Him. If we learn to depend upon Him, in course of time we will find Him supplying all our needs. God never fails to link after us in a wonderful way, but He has his methods of instruction and increasing our faith. If God's servants cannot live and demonstrate a life of faith, they cannot be examples to other believers. When God's servants become beggars. God's work suffers much. If they cannot live a life of faith, it is far better for them to quit, for they are doing more harm than good to God's work, such people do not deserve to be God's servants, because they only bring reproach to His name. Our God is a loving and faithful God. Through our ministry and life of faith we should be in a position to bring joy and satisfaction to His heart.

(b) TRIALS YET TRIUMPHANT

When Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem heard that Nehemiah had eventually succeeded in building the wall of Jerusalem, they wanted to inflict some harm to Nehemiah himself. When the enemy fails to hinder the work of God and when he sees that God's work is progressing, his next weapon is to bring trouble upon His servants. Throughout our service to the Lord we have had to face battles very often. We who are in His service should be prepared for all kinds of battles, which we have to face day by day.

In Neh.6: 2,3 to start with Sanballat and Tobiah tried to draw Nehemiah away from his responsibility of completing the wall. In the same way we as God's children are engaged in His work, worldly people invite us for worldly functions with the bad motive of keeping us away from His work. At times they will even offer the believers positions of honor so that they may be attracted by self-glory. In some place we have seen that when a newly born-again person takes much interest in the things of

God, the leaders of the denominational churches invite them to take up some responsible position such as a chairman or as an elder. It is quite unscriptural to make a newly born again person an elder in the Church. According to 1 Tim.3: 1-10, and Titus 1:6-9, no one should be made an elder unless he is proved and tested. This is another way in which devil deceives the newly born-again people and hinders them from growing in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. When a newly born-again person shows zeal for the Word of God and desires spiritual growth the pastors of the denominational churches invite him to go and give some speeches in their church. Gradually other people also get the desire to become popular and thus many good people are deceived and misled and become ambitious for high positions. Generally those who are ambitious are the ones who cause much trouble. People can see that their own family life is not exemplary. Their children are rebellious. Such people have no burden for prayer. But they want to be elders and if they are not given a chance they begin to create trouble by false propaganda.

In Neh.6: 5-6 we read how these men Sanballat and Tobiah continued to trouble Nehemiah. When all the schemes and procedures of harassing Nehemiah proved quite unsuccessful, in a subtle way they sent an open letter to him with all kinds of false charges against him. These days also we find some people writing filthy letters against God's servants and people. With guilty conscience they resort to falsehood and magnifying matters which have no basis. But our most effective weapon is to pray and commit the matter in the hands of our never failing Lord.

(a) PRAYER THE POWERFUL WEAPON

In Neh.6: 8-9 because of the false and wicked charges of the enemies there came a fear in the heart of the servant of God, but immediately he called upon God beseeching Him to strengthen his hand. We have had similar experiences, but have seen the enemy's devices fade away when we rush to the Lord in prayer at the time of his severe attack. When people accuse us falsely we need not waste our time in arguing with them to defend ourselves. Only persevering prayer can defeat all the skill and cleverness of the enemy in all his attempts to harm us. The enemy becomes completely powerless when at the time of his attack we escape into the sanctuary of prayer time.

From vs.10-12, we see that when Sanballat and Tobiah failed in all their former plans and attempts they thought of yet another scheme. They hired Shemaiah one of Nehemiah's co-workers to give him a harmful advice by misleading him. In vs.10, we read that this Shemaiah advises Nehemiah to hide himself in the temple in order to save his life. If Nehemiah had accepted his advice and had hidden himself in the temple, he would have given room for an evil report and reproach against himself.

The enemy uses the same weapon against the believers these days also. He often uses our friends and close relatives who are worldly minded to give us wrong advice to hinder us in our working for the Lord. That is how many believers have lost their faith in God. As believers we should not consider the advice of worldly friends and relatives. When God's heavenly will and advice are available to us through prayer, then the advice of our worldly friends and relatives should be immediately put into the waster paper basket or the dustbin. According to Matt 12:46:50 only those believers who the will of God are the Lord's brothers and sisters. In the work of God we should not be governed by the advice of our worldly friends and relatives. We have seen many servants of God, failing in such matters. When they are in need

of money for the work of God, such as purchasing of land or constructing a pandal, instead of trusting God, they use worldly friends for financial help. They think that there is nothing wrong in borrowing money as long it can be returned since it is only for the work of the lord. Quite unknown to them such worldly methods of getting money invariably result in barrenness.

However Nehemiah could discern that Shemaiah gave him a wrong advice. Many times people who profess to be God's servants create unnecessary fear in the hearts of other believers. They say that God has spoken to them to warn others concerning certain matters, and thus bring unhappiness and doubts in the hearts and homes of many. We should take a warning from God's Word that we should be never be deceived by subtle people. God's Word is given to us for our daily instruction and guidance.

CONCLUSION

When the wall was completed (Vs 15, 16) the heathen people including the enemies had to admit that it was wrought of God. If we are prayerful and faithful in the Work which the Lord has entrusted to us and continue to persevere in spite of all the attacks of the enemy, just as in the case of Nehemiah, the Lord can use us to rebuild the broken lives, broken homes, and even broken assemblies.

When such a work is wrought in us, even our enemies can see for themselves and cannot help but declare for God's glory that it is wrought of Him.