

# “Mission Accomplished – Sort of”

Nehemiah 6:15-7:7

March 6, 2016

When we moved into our new home in St. Cloud Florida, it needed some help. **We couldn't afford to paint everything**, but we decided to paint our bedroom, and one of the guest bedrooms. **After our bedroom was painted, we decided that the master bath needed some help, so we painted that.** Once that painting was done, we realized that most of the **doors were dingy, and many of them marked up**, so we had those painted. There was an unattractive metal sink in the kitchen, **Christine said that just wouldn't do.** Once we found the sink that we wanted, we decided that we also needed to replace the faucet. Once you do **some work** in your house, there is **always more that you want to do.** The new work, makes the old look...**well...old!** It seems those kinds of tasks in a home are never finished.

Nehemiah has begun a significant job of **reconstruction, remodeling & redecorating.** We are going to see today, that though he has mostly finished, **there was more to do.**

**What a difference 9 months can make!** From Nehemiah receiving the report of **dire conditions in Jerusalem**, until the time that the walls were completed only nine months had elapsed. **The first four months were spent in prayer, another several months in transit from Persia to Jerusalem.**

It then took less than 7 1/2 weeks, **52 days**, to complete a building project, which, **had sat undone for years, and** at one time, seemed like an insurmountable task.

The walls were completed, the gates were restored, but Nehemiah's work was not finished, in some ways, it was just beginning. A city is much more than walls, gates, and houses; a city is people. **In the first half of this book, the people existed for the walls; but now the walls must exist for the people.** God worked in a miraculous way to direct the rebuilding of the city, **now He will work on rebuilding His People.**

God's plans are not ever, **primarily about places or things.** **The Evangelical Free Church of Bemidji, is not primarily this building.** Buildings come and go, they add on and remodel, local churches relocate, even close. **But God's work continues.**

**God is most interested in impacting people's lives,** drawing them to Himself, providing them with salvation through Christ and abundant life, **and making them a meaningful part of His plan, to impact communities and the world.**

As God continues to work in this season of transition for Nehemiah, and for the people of Jerusalem, **In Nehemiah 6 & 7,** we see 3 principles that we can apply in our lives and in the ministry of Evangelical Free Church of Bemidji today.

**Nehemiah 6:1-4, 15-19** “When word came to Sanballat, Tobiah, Geshem the Arab and the rest of our enemies that I had rebuilt the wall and not a gap was left in it—though up to that time I had not set the doors in the gates - Sanballat and Geshem sent me this message: “Come, let us meet together in one of the villages[a] on the plain of Ono.”

But they were scheming to harm me; so I sent messengers to them with this reply: “I am carrying on a great project and cannot go down. Why should the work stop while I leave it and go down to you?” Four times they sent me the same message, and each time I gave them the same answer.”

“So the wall was completed on the twenty-fifth of Elul, in fifty-two days. 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.

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 Shekariah son of Arah, and his son Jehohanan had married the daughter of Meshullam son of Berekiah. Moreover, they kept reporting to me his good deeds and then telling him what I said. And Tobiah sent letters to intimidate me.”

## I. There will still be enemies

It must have been quite a relief for Nehemiah to recognize that to a great extent, **the enemies had been defeated! Or at least, he had been successful in spite of their opposition.** The wall was completed!

One of the greatest defenses against opposition and criticism, **is success!** What more can those opponents say? They were quieted, “afraid, lost their self-confidence.” (vs.16) **But they weren’t gone.** We don’t see Sanballat again after this, but it appears Tobiah, and some of the others were still crawling around, and **are attempting to disrupt and to intimidate.(vs. 19b)**

Nehemiah is smart enough, and a good enough leader to **not allow the opposition to control the events.** They try to intimidate him, then they try to distract and to undermine the people and the work, **Nehemiah won’t have anything to do with that.**

As a Christ follower, and especially as a leader, we need to keep our eye on the prize. Don’t allow difficulties and challenges or opposition to take your focus off of the things of God, and the work that He has for you. Be aware of the opposition. **Recognize the attacks of your enemies,** but keep your focus on God, on His values and principles, and continue to live God’s way. **Always make sure that your actions and motives are glorifying to God.**

**Romans 12:17, 18** “Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.” **You are responsible only for yourself. Be aware of opposition, but keep your focus on God.**

**Nehemiah continued to provide leadership, but not by himself (Nehemiah 7:1-3)** “After the wall had been rebuilt and I had set the doors in place, the gatekeepers, the musicians and the Levites were appointed. 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. I said to them, “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.”

Good, healthy leadership includes the multiplication of people. **In Exodus 18,** Moses’ father-in-law says **“The work is too heavy for you; you cannot handle it alone.”** So Jethro helped Moses to organize a series of other leaders to help direct the people of Israel during their journey.

Jesus put together a group of 12 men to do the work of the ministry. When He sent them out, He always sent them in pairs. **There is strength in numbers, multiplication of leaders and workers.** Don’t do a task alone, another person makes it easier, more enjoyable, they can learn how to do the work.

Nehemiah appoints 2 assistants Hanani who shared Nehemiah’s vision and passion for the city and the people of God. Hananiah, a “man of integrity and feared God more than most men do.” When God selects people for leadership, He doesn’t use the values of the world. **He looks for godly qualities.**

In moving a ministry forward, you must get people involved, in appropriate and meaningful ways. **There is a role for everyone! That means there is a role for you.**

My life verse and the passage that drives my philosophy of ministry is **Ephesians 4:11-13, the main task described there is for the Pastor, and other leaders to “prepare God’s people for works of service.”**

Ministry should always be accomplished in teams. **No one should be by themselves in ministry involvement.** Additional workers allow for the work to get done more quickly and efficiently, and **it is a means of people learning how to do the work of the ministry** for the future.

One of the phrases that I have often used to emphasize this, is that in the church we need to **“encourage, equip and enable” people to do the work to which God has called them.** That is what we see Nehemiah do here in this passage.

## II. God cares about and uses all kinds of people (Nehemiah 7:4-7) God has a plan for you

Once these key people were appointed, **Nehemiah went about the task of identifying the rest of the population.** Genealogies were “lifelines” that linked the Jews to the heritage of the past, but also to their hope for the future.

We too can trace our genealogy, we trace it to Christ. **I Peter 2:9, 10 “But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God...Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God...” You too are counted among the Redeemed!**

The people identified in Chapter 7 were important to God. **They were “pioneers of faith” who trusted God to enable them to do the impossible.**

People from many backgrounds are identified

Families and clans

**Priests, Levites, temple singers & servants**

Gatekeepers,

People from different regions of Persia

People who traced their line back to various key

People in Israel's history, i.e. Servants of Solomon (57)

**This reminds us that God uses all kinds of people** It makes no difference – level of intelligence, amount of education, money, looks, height, what kinds of gifts & abilities we have. **God has a place and a plan for each of us.**

Jeremiah 29:11 “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”

Just think of that! The Creator of the Universe has a plan, and you are an important part of it. **We should be open, available and seeking what God is doing** of which we can be a part.

**The walls are up, the gates repaired, there is optimism for the future, but the task is not yet complete, it never really is.**

In 1976 the people who were a part of the Evangelical Free Church of Bemidji were excited to move into their new building on Washington Avenue. **This location gave them more space in which to do ministry.** As time went along, ministry increased and the building was not completely sufficient for sustained growth. **A temporary fix was to relocate the building** over a basement on a different portion of the property. **This also increased the value and usability** of the property as there was already a vision of selling this property and relocating again.

In 1988 a prime piece of 17 acres was purchased on Carr Lake Rd & Hwy 71, **one of the most visible main roads into Bemidji.**

**By May of 1989, after more than 100 volunteers donated over 8000 hours of labor to the project.** They were able to move into the building. Increased ministry opportunities allowed the gospel to be preached and lives to be impacted in significant ways.

Over the next 10 years the size of the church more than doubled with over 400 people gathering for worship each Sunday morning. **They weren't done yet.**

There was an increasing need for more space, with some of the ministry taking place off of the church property. **In 2004, after prayerful consideration,** the church voted to expand its current building.

**In 2006 they completed a significant building project which more than doubled their square footage for ministry.** They added an improved kitchen, multiple classrooms, expanded nursery, multipurpose gym chapel, fireside room, enhanced entryways, storage, and office spaces. **But they weren't done yet.**

There was also a need to expand the sanctuary. This was accomplished in 2011. **So Mission Accomplished, Sort of!**

**Remember, we are never finished in expanding, moving forward,** and finding new and more effective ways of impacting people's lives and this community with the love of God and the good news of the Gospel. **We are not sure what is next.**

Thinking of the physical components of this church facility **it would be helpful to increase the signage inside and outside.** It would be quite helpful in the increased usefulness of the building to **upgrade and expand the technological components in the sanctuary and throughout the building.**

There has long been a need for additional staff, and a number of ideas of areas in which to expand the ministry for both discipleship and evangelism purposes.

Then, can we say **Mission Accomplished, ...Sort of?**

In the life of the local church, we are never finished, **there is always more to do.** There are always additional opportunities to make a **difference in the lives of people and to impact the community.**

In the same way that a church may never be done building, rebuilding, restructuring and redecorating the church building, and the ministry inside and outside, **we can say the same about our lives as well.**

God is never finished with us, there is always more work to be done, and more opportunities to accomplish. **I always find it helpful when scripture gives us clear and simple instructions** that help us to understand God's will in our lives. We came across one such place at our Thursday night Small Group...

**2 Peter 1:5-8** "For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love. **For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive** in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ"

**As you move on to a new season of ministry here at EFCB, and in your own life, remember the lessons from Nehemiah.**

Seek God first, let Him set the agenda

**Pursue God's plan in God's way.**

Stand firm against opposition and discouragement.

**Care about, and build up people.**

Make sure all of your actions are godly & god honoring.

This sermon was preached at the Evangelical Free Church of Bemidji  
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