

# How to Build a Church?

Nehemiah 6

Persevere

25.07.2004

Over the past few weeks we have been looking at the book of Nehemiah and considering how we build the church. We have seen that Nehemiah prayed and planned to rebuild the Jerusalem wall, and then prepared for attack from enemies. We also saw how Jesus built his church through prayer, planning, and was prepared for attacks against him. And we have seen that he calls on us to be people of prayer and planning as we enjoy the privilege of joining with him in building the church. And we also need to be prepared for the attack.

But Nehemiah 6 gives us the next step in the way we are to build God's family. We are to persevere, to keep on going, and not give up.

Most people can start a job really well. What is much more important and more difficult is to finish it. When the excitement of the honeymoon period fades, the problems become clear and it gets tempting to quit and leave.

Can you imagine paying builders to repair your house. The contract states that the work will be completed in three weeks. On the first day, they are there at 6:00 am, waking you up as they begin their task. After a week and some progress, you notice that they are starting at 7:30 and even 8:00 am.

They have cleared much of the problem area, but now they have to put in the new material and do some more fiddly bits. But the weather turned nasty, and they skip a day. In fact, they do not show for three days, even with nice weather. As the third week starts, they have phoned to say that they have not forgotten, but nothing more is happening. What would you be doing? What would you be doing if no more work got done for six months? Who would you complain to?

It is important to finish the tasks we begin.

Nehemiah had the task of finishing the wall around Jerusalem. Things were going really well. It was much better than most had expected. He had prayed. He had planned. He had

prepared well. God wanted the wall built, because it was the wall of his chosen city. It contained his temple.

The wall had been done. All that remained to be put in place were the gates. The Jews were admiring their wall. Their enemies had not attacked for a while, and they feared the wall. Without the gates, Jerusalem was still an easy target. So they had a mission! They wanted to stop the gates being hung.

But Nehemiah also had a mission. He needed to finish the job.

So often, when people are nearly finished, they begin to relax. They put their feet up and have a short break. Like the hare in the race with the tortoise, the race is almost done, so have a snooze and relax, for it is easy now.

But Nehemiah was not that foolish. He resisted every attempt to relax and not finish the job. 5 times the warlords asked him to leave the city for a chat on a field some distance away.

Maybe they wanted to talk of peace. Maybe it was a trick. How could he tell? They may have even wanted to offer help. But Nehemiah doubted it. He saw their threat. They would capture him, then attack Jerusalem.

When he refused to go, the attacks got more personal (politics has not changed much has it?) They threw mud. They lied. They said the wall was being built as part of a revolution. Nehemiah, they claimed, would soon be the king.

If that news got back to the king of Persia, Nehemiah was a dead man, and Jerusalem was wiped out. God's chosen city would be wiped off the map. It was a real threat. Would he keep on working, or stop to tell the truth and defend himself?

Nehemiah chose to work, and simply deny the charges. He prayed for strength to complete the task.

More and more people tried to stop him. Even

# How to Build a Church?

Nehemiah 6

Persevere

25.07.2004

false prophets lied so he would stop.

But Nehemiah persevered, even through the rough patches. He kept going and finished the wall and gates in just 52 days.

The people in Jerusalem had lived with the broken walls for 100 years. But in less than 2 months, the wall was done. The Jews praised God. His people were safe again. It was important for Nehemiah to persevere through the rough patches.

Jesus also had to keep going, to finish the task he had begun. He came to die for us. But there were many enemies who tried to stop him dying on the cross.

In the great temptation, the devil tried to steer him away from the cross. Peter and James repeatedly tried to push Jesus away from the cross, to be a political king. The 5,000 fed by the 5 loaves and 2 fish wanted a political king. The high priest and his cohorts accused Jesus of wanting to remove Caesar and to proclaim himself as king. Judas Iscariot wanted Jesus to be a revolutionary, and eventually plotted his downfall.

Yet in God's wisdom, the downfall of Jesus was exactly the right path of victory.

Nothing deflected Jesus from going to the cross. Luke 9:51 says that Jesus set his face to go to Jerusalem to die. Even in the garden of Gethsemane, on the night before he died, as he prayed in agony, grappling with his heavenly Father for another way to save us, even then he knew it was the only way.

Jesus persevered through the rough and the roughest of patches.

As we build his church, and as Jesus works in and through us in completing this joyful task, we need to persevere.

Over the past few weeks, we have seen that this involves prayer, planning and being prepared for attacks.

But being prepared for attacks is different to

persevering. Persevering means keeping on going, even while you are being attacked.

The whole of the New Testament rings with encouragement for us to keep going. Hebrews 10:24 says we are to meet together regularly to encourage each other. Philippians 3:14-15 says we are to persevere until we reach our goal. Revelation 2-3 says those who do persevere reign with Christ, having the crown of life, and being able to eat from the tree of life.

How about you? Will you give up when the pressure builds? Will you leave the task of building God's family simply because your nose has been tweaked, or someone mouthed off about you? Will you be a fair-weather Christian who lives for Christ when things are good, but nicks off when things are bad?

Are you praying? Are you planning? Are you prepared? Will you persevere? I pray your answer is always YES.

It is important to finish the task we have begun.