

# Doing A Great Work

Nehemiah 6:3

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**FOCAL Read Together** Nehemiah 6:3 **And I sent messengers unto them, saying, I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you?**

I have never met anyone who didn't want their lives to matter - to make a lasting difference. People would like to think that at the end of their lives they did something significant that they can be remembered for. No one wants the memory of their life consigned to oblivion. Yet this is what happens with entirely too many people. They live their lives in a mundane manner, doing mundane things that have little or no impact on those around them. **C.H. Spurgeon** said:

**"Brethren, be great believers. Little faith will bring your souls to Heaven, but great faith will bring Heaven to your souls."**

Having faith - then *acting* on your faith - will grow your faith. Jesus used a *mustard seed* to describe faith. When His disciples couldn't cast a demon out of a child they asked Jesus why. He replied:

**Matthew 17:20-21 ... Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.**

A mustard seed is the smallest of all seeds - but that's not a bad thing. Though small, when watered it grows, and grows quickly. The mustard seed stays *focused on doing*

*what God designed it to do.* Because of that in a very short time the mustard seed is transformed into a huge tree. It never departed from its calling.

Those who are most successful for God are those who *focus on their calling* to the exclusion of all else. They live their lives for the Lord. One such man was Nehemiah. He was *sold out for God*. He was focused on honoring the Lord, on doing *exactly* what God would require of him. This didn't come without a price. Many enemies rose up against him. In Nehemiah 6:1 we see that "**Sanballat, and Tobiah, and Geshem the Arabian, and the rest of our enemies**" are doing everything they can do to destroy the work of God.

## **1. Working For God Prevents The Christian From Falling Into Satan's Snare**

**CONTEXT Nehemiah 6:1-2** Now it came to pass, when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and Geshem the Arabian, and the rest of our enemies, heard that I had built the wall, and that there was no breach left therein; (though at that time I had not set up the doors upon the gates;) {2} That Sanballat and Geshem sent unto me, saying, Come, let us meet together in some one of the villages in the plain of Ono. But they thought to do me mischief.

The Bible tells us that:

**1 Peter 5:8** **Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:**

Have you ever seen a lion in a zoo? It will walk up and down the fence line, over and over, all day long. The lion is looking for a weak spot in the fence, in a place where it can get itself through. In the same way Satan - the devil - ranges back and forth along the fence line of your lives. He is looking for a hole, for a place where he can get into your business and so destroy your peace with God. **Like a roaring lion** he hopes that the noise he makes with our enemies will cause us to stumble and fall. A lion generally roars just *before* it pounces. It hopes that its prey will be paralyzed with fear or indecision. In that staggering moment, in those few lost seconds, Satan knows that he can destroy what you have worked so hard to build for the Lord.

Nehemiah wasn't going to give the devil a chance. Look at verse 2:

**CONTEXT Nehemiah 6:2** ... Sanballat and Geshem sent unto me, saying, **Come, let us meet together in some one of the villages in the plain of Ono. But they thought to do me mischief.**

This looks like a reasonable request, "**Come, meet with us, and see if we can't reach some sort of compromise that benefit us both**". But Nehemiah knew that God sent him to *build that wall*. There were already internal struggles *within* and among the builders. The *rich Jews* had taken advantage of many, and had to be rebuked by Nehemiah. Nehemiah knew that - if he stopped and went to the **countryside of Geshem (about 25-30 miles from Jerusalem)** that the work would be hindered. **Nehemiah**

perceived that they thought to do him mischief and so declined to leave the work of God. The **King of Kings and Lord of Lords (Revelation 19:16)** had spoken, and Nehemiah was a child in the Kingdom of God. Rather than get off course Nehemiah

**FOCAL Nehemiah 6:3** And I sent messengers unto them, saying, I am doing a great<sup>1</sup> work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you?

The work was **great**, because the work was **God ordained**. Nehemiah focused on the work, not on the enemies. Nehemiah said "**I am doing**". He was actively working. He wasn't thinking about working, he wasn't watching someone else work, but he himself was working. He was working **a great work**. He couldn't be distracted away from his calling. The troublemakers wanted to lure him away from the wall to a *little work*, but his heart was burning to work for God.

Could God have built the wall by Himself? Yes, He could have. God made the heavens and the earth in six days. Surely the Almighty God can do anything. Yet God has always - from the very beginning - required that believers work alongside of Him. In the Garden of Eden - a perfect place without thistles or thorns - God **took the man, and put him in the Garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it (Genesis 2:15)**. The life of the believer is

1 H1419, גדול גדול, gâdôl gâdôl, *gaw-dole', gaw-dole'*, From H1431; *great* (in any sense); hence *older*; also *insolent*: - + aloud, elder (-est), + exceeding (-ly), + far, (man of) great (man, matter, thing, -er, -ness), high, long, loud, mighty, more, much, noble, proud thing, X sore, (') very.

to do as God says, to bring His Kingdom on the earth. Engaged in the Father's Kingdom Work the believer will not be tempted to follow Satan's lower roads, but will always stay on the King's Highway.

**CONTEXT Nehemiah 6:4** Yet they sent unto me four times after this sort; and I answered them after the same manner.

Please note that Nehemiah said "**they sent unto me four times after this sort**". The devil and his messengers is persistent in their temptation. He wants God's people to back away from the wall, back away from the Kingdom work that God has set before us. **They sent unto me four times after this sort**. The devil may change his temptation, change his tactics, but his focus is to get you to *stop the work*. When Satan came to Jesus to tempt Him in the wilderness that old devil told Jesus:

**Matthew 4:3 ... If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.**

This sounds like a very reasonable request. Satan will never approach you with apparently *unreasonable* requests. He's too wily for that! Satan knew that Jesus was hungry, knew that Jesus had fasted (gone without food) for forty days and forty nights (**Matthew 4:2**). If you're hungry it's quite *normal* to eat. The devil said to Jesus "Go ahead and eat .... **IF Thou be the Son of God** turn these stones unto bread". What the devil was asking Jesus was "dance to my tune. Prove Yourself to me. Show me a sign that You are *really* the Son of God." How did Jesus answer?

**Matthew 4:4 ... It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.**

**"It is written. Here is what God says. I will do what God My Father says - not what you say, you old tempter!"** Did Satan run away defeated. No, absolutely not. Just as Nehemiah's enemies - following Satan - attacked numerous times, the devil came back to Jesus. He sat Jesus on a high wall of the Temple and said:

**Matthew 4:6 ... If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.**

**"IF You are the Son of God ... fall from this wall. God Your Father will not let you be harmed."** Again, this appears reasonable, but is a snare. Jesus quickly replies

**Matthew 4:7 ... It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.**

**"I don't care what you say, Satan. Here's what God says - and I'm going to follow Him and Him alone!"** Once more Satan was defeated. But he had to attack one more time. He took Jesus to a place where all the kingdoms of the world could be seen, and said:

**Matthew 4:9 ... All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.**

Now the truth comes out. Here's what Satan wanted all along. **"Jesus, worship me instead of God the Father. Do what I say instead of what he says. If You do, I'll give You all these glorious kingdoms."** Our Lord replied:

**Matthew 4:10 ... Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.**

**"Get away, Satan! You should be worshipping the Lord thy God, and serving Him. This is true of all creation. I'll NOT dance to your tune."** Satan went away mad and disappointed, but defeated.

**ILLUSTRATE** A Sunday School teacher wanted to illustrate how Satan snares believers. She held up a spool of thread and asked the strongest boy in the class to come forward. When he did she asked him could he break a piece of the thread. The child quickly said "yes", and showed the teacher how easy it was for him to snap it. She then asked one of the smallest students to come forward, and asked her to take the spool of thread and start wrapping it around the strong child's hands. **"Keep wrapping the thread while I talk"**. The teacher went on illustrating her lesson for about five minutes, at the end of which the whole spool of thread was wrapped around the older child's wrists. She asked him to break free but, no matter how much he struggled, he could not get his hands apart. Finally he gave up, and the teacher had to cut the threads that bound him. She said, **"This is how Satan works. He feeds us one lie, tries to get us to**

follow him down one path, to do one thing for him, and if we refuse he tries again. If we stand still for the devil and begin to let him work in our lives - to call the shots - then in time we find ourselves ensnared are unable to break free. But while we're lovingly working for God he cannot bind our hands, he cannot ensnare us. Keep on doing what God has called you to do. Keep on living your lives for Jesus Christ, and Satan will never get the upper hand.<sup>2</sup>

Nehemiah's enemies - though rebuffed - *kept inviting him to a meeting*. That appeared quite reasonable, but Nehemiah knew what he was called to do. He kept on building the wall, kept on doing what God called him to do.

## 2. Working For God Keeps Our Focus On God

**CONTEXT** Nehemiah 6:5-7 Then sent Sanballat his servant unto me in like manner the fifth time with an open letter in his hand; {6} Wherein was written, It is reported among the heathen, and Gashmu saith it, that thou and the Jews think to rebel: for which cause thou buildest the wall, that thou mayest be their king, according to these words. {7} And thou hast also appointed prophets to preach of thee at Jerusalem, saying, There is a king in Judah: and now shall it be reported to the king according to these words. Come now therefore, and let us take counsel together.

In the fifth attack Sanballat sent out an open letter to Nehemiah. Letters in the east were usually placed in

<sup>2</sup> adapted from Charles F. Stanley, *When The Enemy Strikes*, pages 33-34. ISBN 0-7852-6610-0. Nelson Books.

silken bags, which were tied up and sealed to prevent others from reading them. A letter that was "open" could be read by anyone - and this was a dangerous letter! In this letter Sanballat declared that what Nehemiah was doing was trying to set up a kingdom in Jerusalem. In fact, Sanballat went on to say, "you have appointed prophets to preach about you in Jerusalem". You, Nehemiah, have your own spiritual leaders doing your public relations. You are trying to revolt against the King of Persia, the very person who allowed you to take this trip. Nehemiah replied:

**CONTEXT** Nehemiah 6:8-9 Then I sent unto him, saying, There are no such things done as thou sayest, but thou feignest them out of thine own heart. {9}

For they all made us afraid, saying, Their hands shall be weakened from the work, that it be not done. Now therefore, O God, strengthen my hands.

"You have devised this lie, Sanballat - it is of your imagination!" When it got around to the workers what Sanballat had done *fear* began to grip them. Nehemiah responded to the lie - but remained on the wall working. He prayed, "Now therefore, O God, strengthen MY HANDS". Notice that he didn't pray for the others, but prayed for himself. Strengthen MY hands. Let ME keep on doing what You've called me to do. Don't let me get off course, dear Lord, for others are watching ME. Protect me, O God, so that I can do your work. The Bible tells us that:

Proverbs 12:19 The lip of truth shall be established forever: but a lying tongue is but for a moment.

Liars can speak their lies to attempt to overthrow the Kingdom Work before us, but we are to ignore the lies and *keep on doing the work*. Nehemiah wouldn't come down from the wall even to defend himself. **He sent a messenger to Sanballat to tell him he was a liar, but he had no time to stop working.**

Jesus told the Pharisees who continually attacked Him:

**John 8:42-44 ... If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me. {43} Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word. {44} Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.**

It is not strange that an agent of Satan will resort to lies, for **Satan is the father of lies**. It was Satan who, in the Garden of Eden, lied to Eve and led her toward destruction. Satan and his agents lie so that they can deceive others. The Bible tells us that he is "**the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world**" (**Revelation 12:9**). If Satan can get Nehemiah to come to him in debate, leaving the work of the Kingdom, then Satan will have won.

Satan uses many snares to trap believers and to divert

us from Kingdom work. He uses the snare of *useless debate*. He uses the *snare of division*. He uses the *snare of doubt*. And one of his greatest nets is the *snare of fear*.

**Proverbs 29:25 The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe.**

Rather than fall prey to fear Nehemiah prayed **God, strengthen my hands. Do the work through me. Use me, O God, to glorify Your Name**. And Nehemiah continued in the work. Dear friends, while you are working for God **you are immortal**. He will not allow His servant to fail. Like King David of old we need to focus on God and *do His work diligently*, saying

**Psalms 118:6 The LORD is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me?**

If you're doing God's work, if you are about **your Father's business**, then Satan cannot stop you. Do God's work for God's Kingdom, and let the Lord take care of the troublemakers. As Jesus said:

**Matthew 6:33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.**

**Seek ye first the Kingdom of God**. Glorify God first in your lives - and He will take care of the rest. Focus on God, on His work, not on Satan's threats. Satan's threats are designed to make you quit the work, to make you feel

little. **Do God's work, and ignore Satan's threats.** The first generation of Israel lost the Promised Land because they lost focus. The Bible tells us that the faithless Israelites - a people who had recently passed *through the Red Sea* and had been given *food and water from God's own hand* - said of the Promised Land:

**Numbers 13:33** And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants: and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight.

**ILLUSTRATE** We are just *too little*. A little girl was out walking with her family one Sunday afternoon. When she was about a block away from home she sat down on the edge of the curb. Her momma and daddy encouraged her to get up, pointing out that their home was within view. "Get up, we're almost home". "No, I can't walk any more steps". "Sure you can, honey, just take a few more steps" "No mommy, **I'm too little**".<sup>3</sup>

Sanballat wanted Nehemiah and his work crews to feel that **they were too little**. "You're standing against the king. You have enemies all about. You're too little!" But Nehemiah refused to come down off the wall.

**FOCAL** Nehemiah 6:3 ... **I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you?**

He stood his ground in spite of Satan's minions. This is a **great work, for it is for a great God**. Nehemiah kept on

doing what God told him to do.

### **3. Working With God Keeps Us From Temptations And Leads Us To Glorify God Our Savior**

**CONTEXT** Nehemiah 6:10-13 Afterward I came unto the house of Shemaiah the son of Delaiah the son of Mehetabeel, who was shut up; and he said, Let us meet together in the house of God, within the temple, and let us shut the doors of the temple: for they will come to slay thee; yea, in the night will they come to slay thee. {11} And I said, **Should such a man as I flee? and who is there, that, being as I am, would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in.** {12} **And, lo, I perceived that God had not sent him; but that he pronounced this prophecy against me: for Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him.** {13} **Therefore was he hired, that I should be afraid, and do so, and sin, and that they might have matter for an evil report, that they might reproach me.**

Someone who was supposed to be a friend - **Shemaiah the son of Deliah** - wasn't really a friend at all. Like **Judas Iscariot** he lounged among the righteous, but was no more than a lizard! His suggestion to Nehemiah was that he - a layman - run away from **Sanballat and Tobiah** and hide in the Temple, in the place where only the Priests were supposed to go. Again we see the devil using his agents to propose *seemingly innocuous and innocent* things, but they are layers of lies.

The devil has often hurt the people of God when they stopped working for God. Two incidents come to mind

<sup>3</sup> ibid, page 89

now in the lives of two kings of Israel, **Saul and David**.

**Saul had been King of Israel for about two years**

when he led Israel in battle against the Philistines. Israel was outnumbered - humanly speaking - for about six thousand men faced some *thirty thousand chariots and six thousand calvary*. The Bible says that:

**1 Samuel 13:7 ... Saul, he was yet in Gilgal, and all the people followed him trembling.**

Saul as well as his armies **felt entirely too little**. So Saul was tempted to do something he should have never done. King Saul knew that sacrifices were to be made by **Samuel the Priest and Prophet**. According to God's Law the Kings came from the line of Judah, and the priests from the line of Levi. A king was never to offer sacrifices to God. But time passed and, after seven days, King Saul began to reason within himself. "We're too small, and we need God to be on our side. I know what God's Word says, but I think He'll forgive my transgression *just this once*. I think I'll make sacrifice since Samuel isn't here."

In the history of bad ideas that was one of the worst. When **Samuel** came he told Saul:

**1 Samuel 13:13-14 ... Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the LORD thy God, which he commanded thee: for now would the LORD have established thy kingdom upon Israel forever. {14} But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the LORD hath sought him a man after his**

**own heart, and the LORD hath commanded him to be captain over his people, because thou hast not kept that which the LORD commanded thee.**

**King Saul** busied himself doing the prophet's job instead of his own job. He stepped out of line, and lost his kingdom because of it. When God calls you to do a work *keep doing it until God says stop*. **We are bought with a price, and are not our own. Follow God, love one another**. He will protect those who keep doing His will.

The King that followed Saul was **a man called David**. David was the **man after God's own heart** that Samuel prophesied of. King David was *supposed* to be out with his men fighting the **Ammonites (descendants of Lot, see Genesis 19:38)**, but for some reason had decided to, "come down off the wall". While lounging on his rooftop rather than tending God's business he looked out and saw the wife of Uriah, **Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11:2)**. His failure to be about God's business would not only embarrass him, but it would lead David to murder, lie, and to lose his firstborn child.

It never pays to follow temptation, but it always pays to follow God. The Bible tells us:

**James 1:13-15 Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: {14} But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. {15} Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.**

God does not tempt, nor will God ever tell you to do that which is against His Holy Word. I have been told by deluded Christians that certain acts and actions are perfectly acceptable, but when reviewing what they tempted me to I had to conclude that this was not of God. God does not lie, and God does not say one thing and approve another. Nehemiah knew this. When tempted to hide in the Temple by his "friend" Nehemiah refused. The devil often presents what seems *reasonable*, but his methods will always be *questionable and contrary to the Word of God*. When tempted to do evil, do as Nehemiah did. He responded immediately with a "no", and kept on saying "no" to every attempt the devil made to derail the work. What was the final result of his faithfulness to God's work. We read:

**CONTEXT** Nehemiah 6:15-16 **So the wall was finished in the twenty and fifth day of the month Elul, in fifty and two days. {16} And it came to pass, that when all our enemies heard thereof, and all the heathen that were about us saw these things, they were much cast down in their own eyes: for they perceived that this work was wrought of our God.**

The work was finished, and God was glorified. The **heathen - the unbelievers - perceived that this work was wrought of our God.**

May God touch your hearts with His Word.



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