

Great Aspirations

Text : **Nehemiah 1: 1-6, 2: 17-20, 3: ...**

INTRODUCTION :

**A. What response does one get when he asks any teenager,
“What ya gonna be when ya grow up?”**

1. After they get past the inference that they’re not already grown up, they’ll describe a grand future they have planned for themselves.
2. It’s normal for young people to aspire for their lives to be successful and prosperous.
 - a. I want to be a doctor or at least registered nurse.
 - b. I want to be an astronaut or a rocket scientist.
 - c. I want to be a professional athlete or a famous sports announcer.

B. In reality, many fail in life, but none aspire to failure.

1. Have you ever heard a young person say, *“I plan to lay around playing video games until my parents kick me out and then I’ll go on welfare.”*
2. Have you ever heard anyone say, *“I’m going out for the team so I can set on the bench, yep, the bench is the best seat’n the house.”*

C. Why is it that so many of those who aspire to great things fail to achieve them ?

1. One reason is most often those who fail have dreams, but not real goals.
 - a. Dreams are but empty aspirations, desires.
 - b. A goal includes a plan of action for how to achieve the aspiration.
2. There are a many formulas for success, but all include at least the following :
 - a. Some degree of native ability.
(*One who can neither dribble nor shoot will probably not be a basketball star.)*
 - b. Realistic expectations.
(*One who is 5 feet tall will probably not be a professional basketball player.)*
 - c. A willingness to develop and to hone the skills necessary for success.
(*All goals require specific physical and/or mental skills.)*
 - d. A willingness to do the work required to achieve the goal. (*CEOs average 80 hr)*
(*Work and success are inseparably linked and most often proportionate.)*
 - e. Patience to persist as long as it takes to accomplish the goal.
(*There is a reason “Easy come, easy go.” and “Nothing worth achieving comes easy.” became adages.)*
 - f. One must have the determination to overcome obstacles and/or start over.
(*Even the best teams lose the ball from time to time and players get injured.)*

D. Of course, our lesson is not about the goals of our youth, but about the spiritual.

1. These same principles apply to achieving God's goal on the earth.
2. God has personal goals for every person.
 - a. He desires that every individual be saved and come to the knowledge of His truth.
I Tim. 2: 3-4 This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, 4 who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.
 - b. Once in a saved condition God desires that all people mature into His likeness.
Eph. 4: 11-16 And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as shepherds and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; 13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. 14 As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; 15 but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, 16 from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.
God's goal : Every member works to mature every other member until we are all conformed to the image of Jesus and all ministering. We know when we are mature because we'll be unified, sound in the faith, lovingly sharing the truth and growing.
3. God also has a collective goal for His people.
 - a. When God called us and purchased us with the blood of His Son, He had something for us to do to accomplish His goal of saving mankind.
Eph. 2: 10 – For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.
 - b. Jesus was very specific as to what was expected of us as His disciples.
Matt. 28: 18-20 And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. (cf – **Luke 6: 46**) 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (cf – **I Pet. 2: 9** ... *proclaim*)
4. Thus, it was never God's plan for His followers to set on the proverbial couch and play videogames while waiting for the Lord to come back and take them home.
 - a. God has a goal ... All men to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth.
 - b. His steps for accomplishing that goal ... All current believers go tell other people.

From our text we can learn from the repair of old Jerusalem how to rebuild New Jerusalem.

I. Nehemiah's actions set a pattern for us to follow in the church.

A. Nehemiah was dismayed by the news that God's holy city was in disrepair.

1. The destruction had been brought on them because of their sin.
 - a. Nebuchadnezzar II (597-586 BC) conquered Judah and destroyed the temple/city.
 - b. In 539 BC, Cyrus, king of Persia, defeated the Babylonians and allowed return.
2. Those who had been left behind during the exile had not repaired the city.
3. How does it make us feel when we see the body of Christ in need of repair ?
Do we remember its former glory and weep before the Lord ?

B. Nehemiah recognized the condition of the city as a reproach upon God.

1. **1: 3** – They said to me, “The remnant there in the province who survived the captivity are in great distress and reproach, and the wall of Jerusalem is broken down and its gates are burned with fire.”
2. Any time that which belongs to God is not accurately reflect God, it is a reproach.
 - a. When our children act contrary to our values, they bring reproach on our family.
 - b. When God's people act in a way that's contrary to God's values, it is a reproach.
I Tim. 6: 1 – All who are under the yoke as slaves are to regard their own masters as worthy of all honor so that the name of God and our doctrine will not be spoken against. (Compare ... **Titus 2: 5** & **II Pet. 2: 2**)
3. When we see a congregation of the Lord's church inactive, just holding services as they slowly dwindle away, do we recognize that as a reproach on God?

C. While weeping Nehemiah laid the problem before God.

1. **1: 4-6** When I heard these words, I sat down and wept and mourned for days; and I was fasting and praying before the God of Heaven. **5** I said, “I beseech You, O LORD God of Heaven, the great and awesome God, ... **6** let Your ear now be attentive and Your eyes open to hear the prayer of Your servant which I am praying before You now, day and night, on behalf of the sons of Israel Your servants, ...
2. This is the response Christians should have when part of the church is in a less than right condition, when the world seems to be winning the battle.

D. He took action to correct the problem. (God acts through His people.)

1. Nehemiah went into action using all of his influence.
 - a. He was just a wine steward, not an important person, but he spoke to the king.

- b. He risked everything ... even his own life.
- 2. Then he journeyed to Jerusalem to convince his fellow Jews in Jerusalem.
2: 17 – Then I said to them, “You see the bad situation we are in, that Jerusalem is desolate and its gates burned by fire. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem so that we will no longer be a reproach.”
- 3. Though it was outside his sphere of his experience, he stayed to see the job done.

*** Nehemiah set the example for all of us.**

- 1 – He recognized the situation as a problem. (*Others knew, but did nothing.*)
- 2 – He took his problem to God.
- 3 – He took action to resolve the problem.

God can and will resolve all issues in His kingdom, but he works through us to do it.

Eph. 3: 20–21 Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, ²¹ to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever ...

II. Nehemiah set a goal; notice how his goal was accomplished.

A. He organized and divided the work up among a lot of people.

- 1. I counted more than 40 groups listed as working on the wall.
- 2. This took a great deal of organization and coordination.
 - a. Today some think it is not good to have “programs” in the church.
 - b. The work of the church should be done in an orderly fashion. **I Cor. 14: 40**
 - c. God has done His work in an orderly fashion ... *You set your watch by the stars.*
- 3. When only a few people in the congregation will do the work, it does not get done.

B. Nehemiah used people from a lot of different backgrounds.

- 1. Vs. **2** ... Folks from Jericho
- 2. Vs. **7** ... The Gibeonites weren’t even Jews.
- 3. Vs. **13** ... The inhabitants from the town of Zanoah were from the south.

*** God uses our life experiences to prepare us to serve Him in different ways.**

C. Nehemiah used people with a variety of different skill-sets.

- 1. Vs. **1** ... The priests
- 2. Vs. **8** ... Rich Goldsmiths and perfumers worked with their hands
- 3. Vs. **13** ... Even priests from other cities came.

4. Vs. 17 ... Levites left their religious duties and came to work on the wall.
5. Vs. 32 ... The busy merchants left their shops to help remove the reproach.

** Whatever your skill-set, God can use you if you will allow Him to do so.*

D. Even the rulers of the city were on the wall working every day.

1. Vs. 9 ... The ruler of half the city came worked on the wall.
2. Vs. 12 ... The ruler of the other half of the city worked and brought his daughters.
 - a. This was contrary to tradition; men and women did not work together.
 - b. God can use dedicated women to serve him in many ways.
 - 1) The daughter of Steven were prophetesses. ... Acts 21: 9
 - 2) Women cannot teach men (I Tim 2) but are required to teach women (Tit 2)
3. Vs. 15 ... A ruler from Mizpah, 16 – Bethzur, 17 – ½ Keilah, 18– ½ Keilah

** God's leaders lead from the front (Sheep are not driven.) ... cf - I Cor. 11: 1*

E. Each man took personal responsibility for the wall by his own house.

1. In Vs. – 10, 23, 28, 29 ... They repaired the wall “over against his house.”
2. Each man needs to take responsibility for his own family, but not just his own.
3. Family is important, but it is a temporary; it ends when the planet ends.
 - a. We all want our family to be saved and should do all we can to that end.
 - b. BUT .. our assignment extends to the whole family of God and beyond.

F. Some refused to work, but others stepped up to get the job done.

1. In Vs. 5 – Moreover, next to him the Tekoites made repairs, but their nobles did not support the work of their masters.
 - a. Evidently, the nobles thought they were too good to be reduced to common labor.
 - b. Even today, many in the church think the work of the church best done by others.

“Well, I would never knock on someone’s door to sign their kids up for VBS.”
2. Their leaders might have felt work beneath them, but the rest of the Tekoites didn’t.

Vs. 3: 27 – After them the Tekoites repaired another section in front of the great projecting tower and as far as the wall of Ophel.
3. Likewise, others kept working until the job was done.
 - a. Vs. 19, 20, 21, 24, 27, 30
 - b. This required significant investment in time and treasure and well as sweat.

** Portions of that wall have been found and are 26 ft. thick.*
 - c. They did not work for wages; they worked to remove the reproach against God.

III. These principles apply directly to our service to God today.

A. When he is born into Christ, each and every Christians is given a ministry.

1. Christians are created to do work for God ... **Eph. 2: 10**
2. That ministry includes evangelism ... **Matt. 28: 18-20**
3. Everyone who is reconciled to God is given the ministry of reconciling others, and that ministry must supplant our personal ambitions. ... **II Cor. 5: 14-21**

B. When the church is left in an unhealthy state, it is a reproach upon God.

1. Every member of the church has responsibility to the church. ... **Eph. 4: 11-16**
2. All that we do for the church, we do for God.
 - a. **Eph. 3: 20**
 - b. **Col. 3: 23-24**
3. Those who do not serve put their responsibility on others, but God knows who is the rebel and who is the obedient servant. (**Lk 6:46-cf-Mt 7:21-23**)

C. Whatever God does for the church, He does through its members.

1. Therefore, we must follow the example of Nehemiah :
 - a. Recognize what God wants done and honestly evaluate the challenge.
 - b. Prioritize God's challenge in our prayers and then in our actions.
 - c. Organize all of our efforts and our resources to best address the challenge.
 - d. Utilize the rich diversity that the church affords us. (*Life experiences, skills, etc*)
 - e. Stabilize our efforts being undistracted and undeterred until the goal is realized.
2. Love for God motivates us to want to please Him.
 - a. How are you demonstrating your love for Him ?
 - b. He died to save all mankind; what are you doing to save them ? **John 3: 16**

D. Let us each be challenged to love God more deeply resulting in sanctification.

1. God knows everything we do for Him and everything we don't , and why.
2. What do you aspire to accomplish for God ? *Are you on the bench or in the game ?*

INVITATION :

Have you surrendered your life to Christ ?

What are you doing to serve Him ?

Lesson Texts :

Nehemiah 1: 1-6

1 The words of Nehemiah the son of Hacaliah. Now it happened in the month Chislev, *in the twentieth year*, while I was in Susa the capitol **2** that Hanani, one of my brothers, and some men from Judah came; and I asked them concerning the Jews who had escaped *and* had survived the captivity, and about Jerusalem. **3** They said to me, “The remnant there in the province who survived the captivity are in great distress and reproach, and the wall of Jerusalem is broken down and its gates are burned with fire.”

4 When I heard these words, I sat down and wept and mourned for days; and I was fasting and praying before the God of heaven. **5** I said, “I beseech You, O LORD God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who preserves the covenant and lovingkindness for those who love Him and keep His commandments, **6** let Your ear now be attentive and Your eyes open to hear the prayer of Your servant which I am praying before You now, day and night, on behalf of the sons of Israel Your servants, confessing the sins of the sons of Israel which we have sinned against You; I and my father’s house have sinned.

Nehemiah 2: 17-20

17 Then I said to them, “You see the bad situation we are in, that Jerusalem is desolate and its gates burned by fire. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem so that we will no longer be a reproach.” **18** I told them how the hand of my God had been favorable to me and also about the king’s words which he had spoken to me. Then they said, “Let us arise and build.” So they put their hands to the good *work*. **19** But when Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite official, and Geshem the Arab heard *it*, they mocked us and despised us and said, “What is this thing you are doing? Are you rebelling against the king?” **20** So I answered them and said to them, “The God of heaven will give us success; therefore we His servants will arise and build, but you have no portion, right or memorial in Jerusalem.”

Nehemiah 3: 1-5

1 Then Eliashib the high priest arose with his brothers the priests and built the Sheep Gate; they consecrated it and hung its doors. They consecrated the wall to the Tower of the Hundred *and* the Tower of Hananel. **2** Next to him the men of Jericho built, and next to them Zaccur the son of Imri built.

3 Now the sons of Hassenaah built the Fish Gate; they laid its beams and hung its doors with its bolts and bars. **4** Next to them Meremoth the son of Uriah the son of Hakkoz made repairs. And next to him Meshullam the son of Berechiah the son of Meshezabel made repairs. And next to him Zadok the son of Baana *also* made repairs. **5** Moreover, next to him the Tekoites made repairs, but their nobles did not support the work of their masters.