

## **JUNE 26<sup>TH</sup> 2005: OVERVIEW OF OT:NEHEMIAH: UNITY: 2:11-3:2**

**You would have noticed**....that as well as giving a brief rundown....contents of book  
Also sought to emphasise something from...contains a relevant message

**Recently this** has come from the life.....central character  
Ezra.....Elisha.....Solomon ....David  
And it would have been so easy.....to talk about Nehemiah

**But I sensed the Lord calling me to focus**....on something different  
That being the Unity amongst the people.....that led to the wall being re-built

**Too often in the Bible**....sad to say.....IT's disunity and not Unity that gains the focus  
For it seems that even amongst God's people.....Unity is not easily come by

*Rather like the visitors to a certain Zoo who were surprised to see the exhibit labeled  
“Coexistence” containing a lion and some lambs. The Zookeeper explained there was  
nothing to it. “All I have to do every now and then is add a few fresh lambs.”*

*Mark Twain...The Fatal Blow...960 p35*

**That Nehemiah** had such unity to work with as he did.....is a miracle in itself  
These people were still dispirited by events.....The sin of inter-marriage ...had shook  
them up.....There was so much potential for disunity.....Yet worked together—52

### **HOW DID IT HAPPEN ??**

#### **1. They worked together for an outcome they all wanted**

**That outcome**....not really the wall.....But what that wall stood for  
→That they would again be seen as God's people—Triumphant  
Not God's people—disgraced .....

**It all began when God** first touched the heart of Nehemiah back there in Susa  
Nehemiah asked one of his brothers.....  
Then God enabled him to gain favour with the king.....Permission & Provision

**And it was thro Nehemiah**.....That God convinced the people in exile.... that even tho the task seemed impossible.....They had to act by faith...and build

**Look at 2:17.....**

Those few words probably summarize several hours of talk  
**We** can imagine Nehemiah pouring out his heart  
Then all the stories of how God's Gracious Hand had been upon the project so far

**And the Leaders first**...and then the people...gave themselves to the vision  
They caught the vision.....And in v18 we read.....Then in 4:6.....

## **2. They put aside individual differences and all worked hard together.**

It seems that just about everyone was prepared to get their hands dirty  
Groups and families took responsibility ....different parts of the wall

**One of the pleasures of** reading thro Nehemiah.....is to see diversity amongst...

**The high** priests and his fellow priests.....first mentioned.....3  
The men of Jericho took a section....even tho they didn't live

**A goldsmith** is mentioned in 3:8 and also a perfume maker

**In 3:12 we find** one of the rulers repairing a section....and we are told that he did so  
With the help of his daughters

**We find people repairing sections opposite their own houses....or next to....**  
Or joining with other families to do a major work

**In 3:20** we read about Barruch son of Zabbai who zealously repaired another section

**Of course in any group....always those who refuse to pull their weight**  
And in 3:5.....(Small town 11 miles from Bethlehem.....Magnificent )

**So many possibilities for division....but they overcome them...(can imagine Mrs B)**  
**THEY worked to the extent of their individual capacities.....**  
(as Bob the builder would say).... to get the job done

### **3. They dealt openly with the pressure and stress as it arose.**

**And arise it did**

The stress of coping with some who refused to work.....like the nobles  
While others.....like the Zealous Barruch.....were going way beyond....

**That could have been so destructive.....** Yet they chose to accept it  
As one of those things that happen...and to get on with job

### **We read about a much greater stress.....in 5:1-5.....**

In this time of National working together.....there were still those....ready to take  
advantage.....  
So that the poorer people could be involved in the work.....the rich were lending....

**It made Nehemiah so angry.....**and could so easily derailed the whole project  
But Nehemiah stopped the work.....called a gathering of everyone.....Openly dealt with

**The major stress they had** to deal with however.....was the opposition of their enemies

It began with sarcasm -----4:1-3.....

**Then physical attacks.....**to the extent that they had to work with a weapon in one hand  
And guards around them at all times

**Then personal attacks on their leader Nehemiah.**

**There was also** the stress of despair and negativity from some of the helpers.....  
As they faced a task that seem so big 4:10.....

**But in each case the stress** was met with prayer and reliance upon God....and positive  
action to combat the problem.....

**4:9 is** a good example of this...where it says.....

**And so the unity Was preserved.....God's work continued**

As I read again that story this week.....I thought to myself...that's the unity we need  
To reach our community.....with the good news of the Gospel

**It's a unity with a purpose**

It's a unity that accepts differences in what each of us can do....that acknowledges both  
.....the weaknesses and strengths in others

**It's a unity** that is not destroyed by internal or external pressures....tho they will come  
Simply because the reliance is upon God.....and His Spirit working thro us

**I also thought to myself.....HOW much easier.....**to have that unity of purpose  
When the purpose is something Physical.....like building a new

**Its time for us.....**to show the same unity now....in a new purpose  
In being God's People for our community.....For those that each of us rub shoulders

**For that to happen we need to understand why we are here**

Why God has put us as His Body in this place

**The Elders have been giving this some thought.....**and we are looking at the 40 days

**We need also to focus more** on the issue of sharing our faith.....I hope this week.....

**But especially we need to begin.....**where Nehemiah began  
With a great desire to be doing what God wants us to be doing  
**And then to pray earnestly.....**in our quite times....our group times...with others

**That God would draw People to Himself.....**and reveal to us the way....that we as  
His people.....Can be part of the process