

# Partnership in the Work of the Lord

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Jerusalem perhaps a section perhaps a chapter that we read very rarely but I trust you'll find that as we read it as we consider it there's so much to teach us about the work of God and raising up his servants to do his work and in service and sacrifice and commitment to the Lord and our God so let's read we'll just read the first 12 verses then Eliashib the high priest rose up with his brothers the priests and they built the sheep gate they consecrated it and set up its doors they consecrated it as far as the tower of the hundred as far as the tower of Hananel and next to him and notice the number of times you see that expression next to we'll come back to that later next to him the men of Jericho built and next to them Zachor the son of Imri built the sons of Hassanah built the fish gate they laid its beams and set up its doors its bolts and its bars and next to them Merimoth the son of Uriah son of Hakoz repaired and next to them Meshulam the son of Berchaiah son of Meshizabel repaired and next to them Zadok the son of Ba'ana repaired and next to them the Techoites repaired but their nobles would not stoop to serve the Lord Joaida the son of Paseah and Meshulam the son of Besadiah repaired the gate of Yishana they laid its beams and set up its doors its bolts and its bars and next to them repaired Melatiah the Gibeonite and Jadon the Merimothite the men of Gibeon and Mizpah the seat of the governor of the province beyond the river next to them Uziel the son of Harhiah goldsmiths repaired next to him Hananiah one of the perfumers repaired and they restored Jerusalem as far as the broad wall next to them Rephiah the son of Harb ruler of Hath the district of Jerusalem repaired next to them Jediah the son of Harumah repaired opposite his house and next to him Hattush the son of Hashabniah repaired while Kajah the son of Harim and Hashub the son of Pahathmoah repaired other section in the tower of the heavens next to him Shalom the son of Halohish ruler of Hath the district of Jerusalem repaired he and his daughters may God bless that reading from his holy word and he's been talking about the five missionaries who went to Ecuador some of whom served in the army and you know there are many reminders of service and war the reminders that are seen in lists of names whether it's the list of 77 names that you see in the the memorial outside mid Calder cemetery 77 names of young men who lost their lives in both the first and the second world war whether it's the list of 54 000 names at the men in gate that eat crown Belgium to commemorate those young men who lost their lives and for whom there's no known grave whatever the memorial whatever the list the list is more than simply names on a wall that list of names tells us of sacrifice it tells us of service it tells us of commitment in the cause of of seeking security that's what we read here in Nehemiah we read of a list of names that will reveal of course a higher sacrifice a higher service a higher commitment in the work of the Lord the purpose of rebuilding that wall to as it were to to give security to the people of Jerusalem and to exalt the name of God these names that are listed there in that chapter part of which we read in

Nehemiah 3 these names are there to tell us of the exalting of the one name that's above all names the name of God the one true God and that honoring God and the work that these individuals did is so crucial for us to see and to understand obviously to get a perspective on our own service and commitment and sacrifice to the one true God and so what I pray we'll see this morning is we look at this this section look at this chapter and I pray that you if you have your Bibles in front of you that you turn to this chapter because we do have to see it and as a whole but that we see what this list tells us this list of names that tells us of a wholehearted commitment to the work of the Lord that commitment seen as we said in sacrifice in unselfishness in enthusiasm and doing that before a watching world that had no desire to honor the one true God and so we're going to find principles I pray in this in this chapter in this section that we read principles to apply for your work for the Lord the work that God has given each one of you to do you who know him you who serve him you've been given work to do in the name of the one true God and I pray that as we consider what we're seeing here we'll see how that work is carried out in unity the unity of God's people working together in fellowship and in partnership one with the other so as I say we're going to probe this chapter the principles are there not just admire but to apply in the work of the kingdom that work that's going to continue until the Lord Jesus returns four things I want to direct your attention to then in this section four things that we can consider carefully must consider carefully three that are in many ways inspirations challenges and one lesson that's a warning the three lessons the three aspects of the chapter that we want to challenge challenge over and consider in our own work for the Lord the example the example of servant leaders unity unity and diversity in the work that the Lord gives us commitment commitment that we find here in the passage and then the warning indeed that it's more than just a challenge the warning to us that we read in verse five that the omission of service and those who would not serve one the true God so let's look first of all an example I mean leaders in any walk of life are only going to command respect and loyalty when they show good example when they lead by good example and certainly in the work of the Lord the example of good workers is absolutely essential in building up the flock of Christ you know and that motivating of others to take their stand your stand for truth leaders must encourage the weak encourage the lonely the suffering the downcast the the despondent leaders inspired by example and of course that those who seek to lead in the church are those who seek to follow the great leader the one true leader the Lord Jesus following him and his example of holiness righteousness righteousness goodness grace truth mercy mercy mercy to the lost and to the needy and here in

Jerusalem we see we see leadership in action and it's not just from Nehemiah who's come to us that were to lead those who are going to rebuild the walls we're going to see leadership from the priests and the high priests the chief priest this man called Eliashib we read in verse 1 then Eliashib the high priest rose up with his brothers the priests and they built the sheep gate I mean these are men that wouldn't normally use their hands and in manual building work these were men who were committed to serving God in the temple but notice chapter 3 the list of names that were given these names are listed first they are the leaders of God's people so they are first listed to show their example and others to follow and that of course has to apply to the church of Christ today who do we follow we follow the head of the church we follow the Lord Jesus we follow the one who left the glory of heaven to come to earth do what to do the work of servants the one who came to lay down his life for sinners and that work the work that Jesus came to do didn't begrudge the work he didn't look down on that work as somehow too demeaning for himself no Jesus showed that ultimate example of servant leadership he did it for the sake of his people his church and for the church today we pray we truly do pray that God will raise up and send leaders servant leaders who follow the savior raising up servant leaders to go into the harvest field yes to carry out the work of reaping of sowing of gathering and doing so even in encouraging and being examples to the flock and doing so not for self-glory but for the glory of God you see that emphasis on the glory of God and not for self you see that even in what we read there in verse one in the example of the priests in their building work and it was more than just getting their hands dirty in the work of rebuilding the walls they were putting God first and we see it in what might just seem a sort of fly away statement but you see it in the very place that they started the work they started the work at the sheep gate the sheep gate that was at the northeast corner of Jerusalem now the sheep gate might not mean anything to us today but it certainly meant much in the time of Nehemiah because it was through the sheep gate the animals sheep particularly were sent and taken to go to the temple the temple was in that particular area and sheep were taken through that gate to be offered as sacrifices in the temple and that's what they were doing that they were to be that sacrifices given to the Lord for forgiveness of sins and notice too that that work that the priests undertook that work was dedicated to the Lord it was consecrated for the Lord the work was dedicated it was consecrated to show that the work was much more than simply an architectural challenge the work was the Lord's work the work was done to bring glory to God the work was done in service for him and even the very walls of Jerusalem would cry out that the city is God's and God to be praised and surely any work that any Christian any congregation undertakes surely is to be dedicated to the Lord

[ 12 : 35 ] even our own congregation and even the work that we're doing at the moment even in the preparatory work that you're seeing in relation to getting sick or return even in part but certainly the return to our church building that work will not succeed unless we dedicate that unless that work is dedicated to the Lord unless that work is committed to the one true God so that we put him first so that we glorify him that we do what we do in seeking first his kingdom and his righteousness because there are so many decisions that have to be made in the life of you as an individual and the life of ourselves as a congregation and yes even the current crisis that's brought new challenges new ways of doing things as we've even as we're even doing just now to worship God that let's commit what we do to the Lord let's dedicate the work that God has given us to do that that work is done primarily for his glory and for the sake of the extension of his kingdom so example but then secondly we find in this passage unity the unity and diversity of of servants

Nehemiah the author of this book he's recorded over 40 names 40 individuals who who worked in that project of rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem there were 40 men men and women from different backgrounds different occupations different family groups very diverse in their background that some were from Jerusalem some were outside of Jerusalem yet they were united in the work of the Lord and you see that unity and diversity in in the details that Nehemiah gives us in the chapter so we said some were from Jerusalem but you we read there that there were men from Jericho men from a place outside Jerusalem called Tekoa and then Gibeon and Mizpah and yet they had that united purpose and seeking to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem and seeking to restore the name of God as to be honored and glorified in that city and not only that the the different occupations not just the priests there were goldsmiths there were civic rulers there were merchants or perfume makers goldsmiths we said all united in doing the work of the Lord and even that last verse that we read we read there of sons and daughters of these civic rulers these men and women who were involved in the work of rebuilding the work of giving glory to God and as we said when we were reading the passage again that little phrase that has to be addressed the phrase that we see again and again next to him or next to them the words literally in the original language are on the hand now we don't use that expression nowadays but we use the expression shoulder to shoulder it's the same idea this this unity in the work of the Lord's people for the sake the glory of God so whether they were from Jerusalem or whether they weren't from Jerusalem whether they were leaders of the city or whether they were tradesmen they acted as one in the rebuilding of the city and that application is an application that's truly is present today in the rebuilding of the church of the Lord Jesus Christ we're not building physical walls as such but we seek to be builders of the one true church seek to to be builders building on that the apostolic truth of the gospel building on that foundation laid by the Lord Jesus Christ building standing doing that building work standing shoulder to shoulder and doing it for the cause of the kingdom and so we have to show that oneness show that we are standing shoulder to shoulder in doing that work and whatever background we're from let's be there side by side next to one another doing the work of the Lord for the kingdom's sake so unity we've seen example we've seen unity but then thirdly commitment the commitment of these workers the commitment of God's service we notice as we were reading that each group was assigned a particular part of the wall a particular section of the wall and we're told that each of these sections they completed the work and there certainly wasn't anything shoddy or half-hearted in that work there was no grumbling about what the particular area they were assigned to it's interesting that the areas that they were assigned to were areas that were particularly close to their homes

so they would have that added incentive to protect their particular area of the wall but the work was done in obedience and it was done well fascinating even if we read the whole chapter we'd see even that some individuals are named more than once some working in one particular section of the wall and then going into another section later in other words they were as if we're doing that extra mile they weren't content just in the minimum effort required in the work of the kingdom the work of building that wall they were prepared to work again and again going that second mile going beyond the minimum and may it not be said that in our work that we do for the Lord and your work that you do that God has given you to do may it not be said that you're just there to do the minimum you know just enough to think that God somehow will be pleased just with my few efforts no God demands that we give him our all that we give him everything that we are heart, soul, mind, strength in the work that he's given us and so let's seek to go beyond the minimum as it were to be those who are second mile servants be those who show that eager commitment to do the work of the Lord the workers there that we've seen in their commitment they weren't there just to do the minimum to do what was simply required no they did what they did gladly because they knew it was the Lord's work that they were doing and again we have to say this the work that they did wasn't just for the immediate time that work, that repair that they did would last beyond their lifetime that didn't matter to these men whether they were from Jerusalem or outside Jerusalem they were content to do what they did for the Lord there and then for the purpose not just for the immediate purpose but for generations to come that's what we do in the work that God has given us to do whether it's in the work of

Livingston Free Church or whatever congregation God sends you to that work is not just for the immediate it's for future generations we might not see the consequence even of the work that we've been given to do now we might not see the full consequences of that work consequences might not be evident for many many years and even beyond our particular lifetimes many a parent has prayed for a child to be converted and that child converted after many many years maybe even a church building project or even particular projects that we're engaged in at the moment the work that's carried out sacrificially the givings that are given sacrificially we might not see the full outcome of that work and maybe not even see that until we enter the glory of heaven when the builders in Jerusalem they wouldn't see the completed the full extent of their work they built and they built and repaired for the good of the Lord's people for the glory of God's name their works would follow them and so that has to be the case for you and for me in the work that God has given us to do and Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians chapter 3 he tells us about the work that's carried out in the Lord's name and Paul tells us the full extent of that work will only be revealed when the Lord Jesus returns when your work when my work will be made known fully and it won't be how successful we are and it won't be how popular we've been but it will be how faithful you've been and Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 3 that the fire of God's judgment will test their work and will your work turn out to be gold and silver and precious stones that will endure the fire of God's judgment or will your work prove to be wood and straw and hay that will burn you see what you do now what we do now what I do now in the work of the kingdom has an impact not just in the present but the future and that you know should be an added incentive that should be an encouragement to each one of you in the work that you do because it's not for self glory it's not for any self praise but it's to be undertaken with that full commitment to God to the one true God that he'd use the work of your hands the work of your minds the work of your heart that you'll do what you do for his glory and for the blessing on those still to come so we've seen commitment we've seen example we've seen unity finally here's the warning omission the omission of service

I actually think Nehemiah 3 is one of the great thrilling chapters of the Old Testament that really captures the sense of unity and commitment and service and sacrifice that the Lord's people have undertaken for the Lord but there's a note of sadness in this chapter we read it in verse 5 the nobleman of Tekoa the area just outside of Jerusalem we read these words and next to them the Tekoaites repaired but their nobles would not stoop to serve the Lord in other words they wouldn't work they considered the work of rebuilding the walls somehow beneath them they weren't going to do something that they considered as nobles somehow beyond their dignity and standing as nobles in that particular part of the land they were proud people they were arrogant they considered that the work of rebuilding was for others and not for them I mean these were people that lived within sight of Jerusalem they could see the building work going on and yet they didn't even lift a finger to help and that has to be a warning to each one of us let's be so wary of avoiding the Lord's work especially if we think the work's beneath us because remember that's not the way of the Lord Jesus Christ

[ 25 : 05 ] Jesus came to do the work that his father had given him to do he came to do that work as a servant as a slave read in John chapter 13 remember that Jesus showed the full extent of his love when he washed his disciples feet when he undertook the work of a servant of a menial servant and Jesus showed his love to the uttermost Jesus stooped lower than anyone could possibly stoop in order to save lives in order to save us from our sins Jesus came in all humility he came as the eternal son of God he came and became man he lived a life of suffering he lived a life of service even unto death he did that so that you might have everlasting life the same saviour who's given work for each one of you to do and to accomplish yes for the sake of the church for the sake of his name for the sake of generations yet to come you know out there it's a spiritual building site the walls of church unity need to be repaired the walls of security against the incursion of sin and Satan these walls need to be repaired these walls need to be strengthened your faith in the Lord

Jesus needs to be strengthened through faith and active commitment to him your life my life is a rebuilding work it's a work in progress so we have to ask ourselves you have to ask yourself what are you building is it Christ the gospel of truth is it something else is it self even is the work that you are building doing is it like the wise person the wise man who built his house and the rock who built his house his life and the Lord Jesus Christ or is your life like the foolish person who built his life in the sands of the world the sands of self has no lasting foundation I pray that you who are workers for the Lord you will do that united to Christ united one to another as we're together in Christ partners in the gospel wholly committed in service to him and doing that sacrificially in your giving of self for the cause of the gospel for the cause of the eternal kingdom of God for the glory of his name the name that's above every other name the name of our saviour the Lord

Jesus Amen let us pray Our heavenly father we give you thanks for your word for every part of your word for even these parts that might seem even inconsequential but of so much relevance to each and every generation and so Lord we pray for the work that even is being done in our own congregation that that work will be done through example through commitment in unity and by all that truly we will seek to honour your name in every aspect of that work hear us Lord as we continue before you now go before us we ask we pray these things in Jesus name Amen well let's close this part of the service now in Psalm 84 Psalm 84 that Ian's just put up on the screen singing from verse 8 to 12 hear my prayer

Lord God Almighty and receive the plea I meet listen to me God of Jacob hear me for your mercy say look upon our shield and bring favour to your chosen king 8 to 12 Psalm 84 to God's hear my prayer Lord Lord Almighty and receive the plea I may listen to me God of Jacob hear me for your mercy say put up on our shield and bring favour to your chosen king one day in your course is better than a thousand days elsewhere let me stay in my

God's temple let me be adorned there brother love my happiness love in the text of wicked  
for the Lord his grace and honor God will be a shield and sun he will not withhold his  
blessing from the just and blameless one Lord almighty great and true bless the one who  
trusts in you let's close in prayer now and may grace mercy and peace from

[ 31 : 40 ] God Father Son and Holy Spirit rest upon and remain with you both now and forever more  
Amen