

The author of this book was no doubt Nehemiah himself. There are portions of the book written in the first person (Neh. 1-7; 12:27-47, and 13). But there are also portions of it in which Nehemiah is spoken of in the third person (Neh. 8; 9; 10). It is supposed that these portions may have been written by Ezra; of this, however, there is no distinct evidence. These portions had their place assigned them in the book, there can be no doubt, by Nehemiah. He was the responsible author of the whole book, with the exception of Neh. 12:11, 22, 23.

The date at which the book was written was probably about 431-430 B.C., when Nehemiah had returned the second time to Jerusalem after his visit to Persia.

The book, which may historically be regarded as a continuation of the book of Ezra, consists of four parts.

- (1.) An account of the rebuilding of the wall of Jerusalem, and of the register Nehemiah had found of those who had returned from Babylon (Neh. 1—7).
- (2.) An account of the state of religion among the Jews during this time (Neh. 8—10).
- (3.) Increase of the inhabitants of Jerusalem; the census of the adult male population, and names of the chiefs, together with lists of priests and Levites (Neh. 11:1—12:26).
- (4.) Dedication of the wall of Jerusalem, the arrangement of the temple officers, and the reforms carried out by Nehemiah (Neh. 12:27—Neh. 13).

This book closes the history of the Old Testament. Malachi the prophet was contemporary with Nehemiah.

Leadership qualities evident in the life Nehemiah are:

(Nehemiah 1:1-3) **1. His concern for the people and God's Work**

He had a position of honor and a life of ease as the king's cupbearer. But **he wasn't desensitized by a comfortable life**

Nehemiah was overwhelmed with sorrow and he sat down and wept. He waited and fasted certain days and prayed. We learn from this that a **genuine concern cannot help but express itself in prayer.**

We learn that this **concern moved Nehemiah to action.** How much greater should our concern for the moral fiber of our nation move us to both prayer and action.

We should be grieved over the broken walls in our country, in our churches, the coldness, indifference, the inconsistencies, the divisions, errors, opposition and reproaches. The enemy enters in to injure, scatter and destroy. We need to pray that God will give us a holy concern for His work in defeating the power of the enemy.

The Apostle Paul was a leader, a man of pedigree, prominence, who cashed it all in to pursue a new passion, only to encounter obstacles and

sufferings. One of his greatest burdens was his concern for the condition of the church,

2 Cor. 11:22-28 Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? So am I.

[23] Are they ministers of Christ?--I speak as a fool--I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often.

[24] From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one.

[25] Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep;

[26] in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren;

[27] in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness--

[28] besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches.

You can never really help the church until you get a burden for the church.

You may see it's problems and it's blemishes, but does it make you want to run from it as if it is leprous, or does it bring you to your knees to pray for it and for yourself, looking to God in humility and looking for answers?

(Nehemiah 1:4-11) **2. His complete dependence on God. Prayer fasting and waiting on God.**

He doesn't take matters into his own hands because now all of a sudden he's angry. He is not going to advance on emotion alone. He sets himself to find God's answers.

God given burdens require God size shoulders to bear them. His strength is made perfect in weakness. So guess who must decrease so that that He can increase.

Humility and brokenness and dependence upon God for church leadership is not an option.

(Nehemiah 2:1-5) **3. He waited, looked for, and took the opportunity when it arose...**

Neh. 1:11 O Lord, I pray, please let Your ear be attentive to the prayer of Your servant, and to the prayer of Your servants who desire to fear Your name; and let Your servant prosper this day, I pray, and **grant him mercy in the sight of this man.**" For I was the king's cupbearer.

He didn't say anything until the time was right and he was asked. Do you remember I the book of Esther that it was even forbidden for the queen to approach the king without an invitation. Nehemiah knew he needed mercy in the sight of the king and prayed that he would have it. **and he found favor**

Side note: Nehemiah got his papers in order before he left on his journey. He already had a plan in his heart before he approached the king.

(Nehemiah 2:6-10) **4. He was willing to sacrifice a good position as the King's cupbearer to see God's kingdom built and people helped.**

Sometimes for us to move into something God has planned for us, we have to move out of something we've grown quite comfortable with.

Examples

Elisha has a barbeque

1 Kings 19:19-21 So he departed from there, and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he was with the twelfth. Then Elijah passed by him and threw his mantle on him. [20] And he left the oxen and ran after Elijah, and said, "Please let me kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow you." And he said to him, "Go back again, for what have I done to you?" [21] So Elisha turned back from him, and **took a yoke of oxen and slaughtered them and boiled their flesh, using the oxen's equipment, and gave it to the people, and they ate.** Then he arose and followed Elijah, **and became his servant.**

Peter, Andrew, James and John

Matthew 4:18-22 And Jesus, walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw two brothers, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. [19] Then He said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." [20] They immediately left their nets and followed Him. [21] Going on from there, He saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets. He called them, [22] and immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed Him.

God will meet you in the "as" It "as" you takes steps of faith from where you are to where you need to go that God shows up.

Some thoughts about where God is found: God will meet you in the "as"

As Abraham lifted the knife in obedience, God met him
As the priest stepped into the Jordan, it parted
As the lepers went to show themselves to the priests they were healed
As Paul and Silas sang in the prison the place was shaken
As we go to fulfill the great commission Jesus said "I am with you always"

The enemy of "as" is the zone... The Comfort zone.

The Comfort Zone — on a thermostat between 68 - 72 degrees.
It's the place of comfort, not too hot, not too cold.
The comfort zone is the place of satisfaction

The older we get it seems the more we look for that place of comfort and satisfaction. We set our sights on retiring. We try to establish a zone that we believe we can be comfortable in.: a certain house, car, retirement income, health care package etc. We want to be comfortable and satisfied

The reason we don't like change is because it throws us out of our comfort zone. It's the place of familiarity. There are so many people striving to settle into the zone that they can't enjoy the journey

Financial Zones - We get used to a certain amount of money and we'll do anything we can to stay in the zone. If we have a good month, we'll usually kick back a little, throw a party, spend the extra until were back in the zone. If we have a bad month we'll push a little harder to get back in the zone.

Relational Zones - some like to be with the crowd, some like being alone. If you like being alone and you're with people all the time, you'll feel out of balance. You're outside of your comfort zone.

Image zone - The "I cans" and the "I can'ts." Pro 23:7- For as he (a man) thinketh in his heart, so is he.

The Comfort Zone is the graveyard of potential

Potential is...dormant ability...reserved power...untapped strength...unused success...hidden talents...capped capability.

All you can be but have not yet become...all you can do but have not yet done...how far you can reach but have not yet stretched. It's what you can accomplish but have not yet accomplished. Potential is unexposed ability and latent power.

Potential means nothing without application. It's the application that releases our potential. It's the application that takes us outside our comfort zone.

Crisis - the turbulent removal of the zone can unleash potential
Necessity is the mother of invention
When the going gets tough the tough get going...

Comfort Zones are the place of stagnation and complacency and dullness

God has called us to a life outside the comfort zone

THE TRUST ZONE Pro 3:5-6 Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. 6 In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

Trusting God is for some of us outside our zone.

(Nehemiah 2:11-16) **5. He viewed the condition of the city and of the people to find out the facts for himself before giving constructive advice**

Proverbs 24:3 (LB) Any enterprise is built by wise planning, becomes strong through common sense, and profits wonderfully by keeping abreast of the facts.

Proverbs 24:3 (NKJV)
Through wisdom a house is built, And by understanding it is established;

(Nehemiah 2:17, 18) **6. He had an aggressive, progressive attitude; a victory spirit. His advice was to "rise up and build." He was a great encourager**

Neh. 2:17 (NIV) Then I said to them, "You see the trouble **we are in**: Jerusalem lies in ruins, and its gates have been burned with fire. **Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem**, and **we will no longer be in disgrace.**"

Sometimes it takes an outsider to inspect the rubble and come up with a plan for change.

7. He knew how to handle opposition

Eight kinds of opposition Nehemiah experienced and how he overcame

- **1. Ridicule and intimidation (Neh. 2:19,20)**

Neh. 2:19-20 But when Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite official, and Geshem the Arab heard of it, they laughed at us and despised us, and said, "What is this thing that you are doing? Will you rebel against the king?"

Matthew 13:18-23 "Therefore hear the parable of the sower: [19] When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside. [20] But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; [21] yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. **For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles.** [22] Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful. [23] But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty."

Shadrach Meshack and Abednego

Daniel 3:13-19 Then Nebuchadnezzar, in rage and fury, gave the command to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. So they brought these men before the king. [14] Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying to them, **"Is it true,** Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the gold image which I have set up? [15] Now if you are ready at the time you hear the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, and you fall down and worship the image which I have made, good! But if you do not worship, you shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. **And who is the god who will deliver you from my hands?"**

- He overcame through confidence in God and perseverance

[20] So I answered them, and said to them, "The God of heaven Himself will prosper us; therefore we His servants will arise and build, but you have no heritage or right or memorial in Jerusalem."

The Leader must maintain his confidence in God.
The confidence Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego

[16] Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego answered and said to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this

matter. [17] If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. [18] But if not (*but if that is not the case*), let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up." [19] Then Nebuchadnezzar was full of fury, and the expression on his face changed toward Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. He spoke and commanded that they heat the furnace seven times more than it was usually heated.

- **2. Anger and contempt (Neh. 4:1-3)**

Neh. 4:1-3 But it so happened, when Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, that **he was furious and very indignant**, and mocked the Jews. [2] And he spoke before his brethren and the army of Samaria, and said, "What are these feeble Jews doing? Will they fortify themselves? Will they offer sacrifices? Will they complete it in a day? Will they revive the stones from the heaps of rubbish--stones that are burned?" [3] Now Tobiah the Ammonite was beside him, and he said, "Whatever they build, if even a fox goes up on it, he will break down their stone wall."

- He overcame by (Neh. 4:4-6)
 - 1. Prayer
 - 2. Hard work
 - Self-control

Neh. 4:4-6 Hear, O our God, for we are despised; turn their reproach on their own heads, and give them as plunder to a land of captivity! [5] Do not cover their iniquity, and do not let their sin be blotted out from before You; for they have provoked You to anger before the builders. [6] So we built the wall, and the entire wall was joined together up to half its height, for the people had a mind to work.

- **3. Conspiracy to stir people up to war against them (Neh 4:7,8)**

Neh. 4:7-8 Now it happened, when Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites heard that the walls of Jerusalem were being restored and the gaps were beginning to be closed, that they became very angry, [8] and all of them conspired together to come and attack Jerusalem and create confusion.

The enemy will try to stop you from without

- He overcame by (Neh 4:9)

Neh. 4:9 Nevertheless we made our prayer to our God, and because of them we set a watch against them day and night.

- 1. Prayer and watchfulness
- 2. Putting watchmen in place

- **4. Discouragement of the people because of all the rubbish, the opposition of the enemy and the negativity of their own people (Neh 4:10-12)**

Neh. 4:10-12 Then Judah said, "The strength of the laborers is failing, and there is so much rubbish that we are not able to build the wall." [11] And our adversaries said, "They will neither know nor see anything, till we come into their midst and kill them and cause the work to cease." [12] So it was, when the Jews who dwelt near them came, that they told us ten times, "From whatever place you turn, they will be upon us."

A smart enemy attacks when we're at our weakest, when we're in confusion. He intimidates with fear, frustration and fables

2 Tim. 1:7 For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind. (self-discipline)

This is where discouragement attacks and wants to settle. This is where fear loves to nest and worry breeds its torment

Cleaning up debris and trying to wade through emotional rubbish is tiring but necessary. It's easy to get weary in well doing saying to yourself, "what's the use." The task is too big... you can't do it

Illustration: Star Fish on the beach... what good are you doing? There's too many of them what's the use. It doesn't really matter....

To this one it does!

- He overcame by (Neh 4:13-18)
 - 1. Made them watchmen and armed them
 - 2. He encouraged them to not be afraid- don't let fear grip you.
 - 3. Remember the Lord. It is His work and He is great and powerful
 - 4. Fight for your brethren, your sons, your daughters, your wives, your houses. Fight for your freedom. You are building for the future.

Neh. 4:13-18 Therefore I positioned men behind the lower parts of the wall, at the openings; and I set the people according to their families, with their swords, their spears, and their bows. [14] And I looked, and arose and said to the nobles, to the leaders, and to the rest of the people, "Do not be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, great and awesome, and fight for your brethren, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your houses." [15] And it happened, when our enemies heard that it was known to us, and that God had brought their plot to nothing, that all of us returned to the wall, everyone to his work. [16] So it was, from that time on, that half of my servants worked at construction, while the other half held the spears, the shields, the bows, and wore armor; and the leaders were behind all the house of Judah. [17] Those who built on the wall, and those who carried burdens, loaded themselves so that with one hand they worked at construction, and with the other held a weapon. [18] Every one of the builders had his sword girded at his side as he built. And the one who sounded the trumpet was beside me.

- **5. Selfish Greed – opposition one of another – taking advantage of the less fortunate (Neh 5:1-5)**

Neh. 5:1-5 And there was a great outcry of the people and their wives against their Jewish brethren. [2] For there were those who said, "We, our sons, and our daughters are many; therefore let us get grain, that we may eat and live." [3] There were also some who said, "We have mortgaged our lands and vineyards and houses, that we might buy grain because of the famine." [4] There were also those who said, "We have borrowed money for the king's tax on our lands and vineyards. [5] Yet now our flesh is as the flesh of our brethren, our children as their children; and indeed we are forcing our sons and our daughters to be slaves, and some of our daughters have been brought into slavery. It is not in our power to redeem them, for other men have our lands and vineyards."

- He overcame by (Neh 5:6-19)
 - 1. Holy anger and a strong rebuke
 - 2. his example of self-sacrifice

Neh. 5:6,7 And I became very angry when I heard their outcry and these words. [7] After serious thought, I rebuked the nobles and rulers, and said to them, "Each of you is exacting usury from his brother." So I called a great assembly against them. [8] And I said to them, "According to our ability we have redeemed our Jewish brethren who were sold to the nations. Now indeed, will you even sell your brethren? Or should they be sold to us?" Then they were silenced and found nothing to say. [9] Then I said, "What you are doing is not good. Should you not walk in the fear of our God because of the reproach of the nations, our enemies?"

[10] I also, with my brethren and my servants, am lending them money and grain. Please, let us stop this usury! [11] Restore now to them, even this day, their lands, their vineyards, their olive groves, and their houses, also a hundredth of the money and the grain, the new wine and the oil, that you have charged them." [12] So they said, "We will restore it, and will require nothing from them; we will do as you say." Then I called the priests, and required an oath from them that they would do according to this promise.

[13] Then I shook out the fold of my garment and said, "So may God shake out each man from his house, and from his property, who does not perform this promise. Even thus may he be shaken out and emptied." And all the assembly said, "Amen!" and praised the Lord. Then the people did according to this promise.

[14] Moreover, from the time that I was appointed to be their governor in the land of Judah, from the twentieth year until the thirty-second year of King Artaxerxes, twelve years, neither I nor my brothers ate the governor's provisions.

[15] But the former governors who were before me laid burdens on the people, and took from them bread and wine, besides forty shekels of silver. Yes, even their servants bore rule over the people, but I did not do so, because of the fear of God.

[16] Indeed, I also continued the work on this wall, and we did not buy any land. All my servants were gathered there for the work.

[17] And at my table were one hundred and fifty Jews and rulers, besides those who came to us from the nations around us.

[18] Now that which was prepared daily was one ox and six choice sheep. Also fowl were prepared for me, and once every ten days an abundance of all kinds of wine. Yet in spite of this I did not demand the governor's provisions, because the bondage was heavy on this people.

[19] Remember me, my God, for good, according to all that I have done for this people.

- **6. Craft and deception (Neh 6:1-2)**

Neh. 6:1-2 Now it happened when Sanballat, Tobiah, Geshem the Arab, and the rest of our enemies heard that I had rebuilt the wall, and that there were no breaks left in it (though at that time I had not hung the doors in the gates), [2] that Sanballat and Geshem sent to me, saying, "Come, let us meet together among the villages in the plain of Ono." But they thought to do me harm.

- He overcame by (Neh 6:3,4)
 - Spiritual perception
 - Wisdom
 - Continuing in the work of realizing the importance of objectives

Neh. 6:3-4 So I sent messengers to them, saying, "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down. Why should the work cease while I leave it and go down to you?"

[4] But they sent me this message four times, and I answered them in the same manner.

- **7. False accusation and slander to put fear in the leader (Neh 6:5-7,19)**

Neh. 6:5-7 Then Sanballat sent his servant to me as before, the fifth time, with an open letter in his hand. [6] In it was written: It is reported among the nations, and Geshem says, that you and the Jews plan to rebel; therefore, according to these rumors, you are rebuilding the wall, that you may be their king.

[7] And you have also appointed prophets to proclaim concerning you at Jerusalem, saying, "There is a king in Judah!" Now these matters will be reported to the king. So come, therefore, and let us consult together.

Neh. 6:19 Also they reported his good deeds before me, and reported my words to him. Tobiah sent letters to frighten me.

- He overcame by (Neh 6:8-9)
 - 1. Confrontation
 - 2. Prayer for strength
 - 3. Self-control

Neh. 6:8-9 Then I sent to him, saying, "No such things as you say are being done, but you invent them in your own heart." [9] For they all were trying to make us afraid, saying, "Their hands will be

weakened in the work, and it will not be done."Now therefore, O God, strengthen my hands.

- **8. Treachery/when one of your own turns against you (Neh 6:11-14)**

Neh. 6:10-13 Afterward I came to the house of Shemaiah the son of Delaiah, the son of Mehetabel, who was a secret informer; and he said, "Let us meet together in the house of God, within the temple, and let us close the doors of the temple, for they are coming to kill you; indeed, at night they will come to kill you."

[11] And I said, "Should such a man as I flee? And who is there such as I who would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in!"

[12] Then I perceived that God had not sent him at all, but that he pronounced this prophecy against me because Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him.

[13] For this reason he was hired, that I should be afraid and act that way and sin, so that they might have cause for an evil report, that they might reproach me.

- He overcame by (Neh 6:11-14)
 - Courage (vs.11)
 - Spiritual perception (vs. 12)
 - Prayer (vs. 14)

The wall was built in just 52 days through vision, hard work, courage, determination, prayer, and great leadership. (Neh 6:15-19) The completion of the walls caused the enemy to be much cast down in their own eyes and also increased the confidence of God's people (Neh 2:17 & Psa 86:17). When the task was completed, Nehemiah placed the city of Jerusalem under the leadership of a faithful man who feared God (Neh 7:1-3)