

# The Old Paths

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## “Godly Examples From Nehemiah”

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**T**he book of Nehemiah records a very interesting time in the history of the Israelites. Prior to Nehemiah’s time, God’s people had been captives in the land of Babylon. Cyrus, King of Persia, overthrew the Babylonians and allowed the Israelites to return to Jerusalem (Ezra 1). While there, they rebuilt their homes, but did not rebuild the Temple, nor the walls of Jerusalem as they were supposed to do (Hag. 1:3-4; Ezra 5:1).

Enter Nehemiah, the King’s cupbearer (Neh. 1:11, 2:1) whom God raised up to lead the Israelites, and have them rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. With Nehemiah, these people did exactly as they were supposed to do. In this issue, we wish to consider the good examples of Nehemiah and these people, and see some things they did which demands our imitation today.

### ***The Israelites Had A Mind To Work.***

Nehemiah 4:6 records, “*So built we the wall; and all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof: for the people had a mind to work.*” These people made short work of this wall, because they had a “*mind to work*”! This same mind is needed today. If one wonders why so little is being done today among God’s people, it is because of the above. People are lazy; they do not have the mind to work for the

Lord! It seems like people have time to do everything else but the work which is most important. How sad.

Seeing that Christ lived upon this earth as a servant, who are we to demand that we be served? Who are we to say that we will not serve the Lord? Paul said, “*I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God*” (Rom. 12:1-2). He told the Corinthians, “*Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord*” (I Cor. 15:58). Christianity is not for the lazy nor for the faint of heart! Let us all have the mind to work, and then do the will of God while we have the time and opportunity. In doing God’s will, we will see Heaven, and enjoy the promised rest (Heb. 5:8-9, 4:9).

### ***The Israelites Were Fervent In Prayer.***

Prayer was an important part of Nehemiah’s life (Neh. 1:4, 2:1-4). Once he was in Jerusalem, prayer was a part of all the Israelites’ lives as they built the wall (Neh. 4:7-9). During times of distress, discouragement, despair, as well as times of gladness and joy, these

people prayed to God; realizing that they could not accomplish this work on their own.

What about us? Are we fervent and continual in our prayers to God? Brethren, it is a command to “*pray without ceasing*” (I Thess. 5:17)! Jesus taught “*that men ought always to pray, and not to faint (lose heart)*” (Lk. 18:1). Besides this, we see Jesus, as well as the apostles, praying to God time and again in the New Testament.

Knowing these things, how could we not, as children of God, pray to our Father on a continual basis? Do we sometimes fail to realize that prayer is a privilege only Christians enjoy? Not everyone’s prayers are acknowledged by God (Jn. 9:31)!

Prayer is our opportunity to talk and pour out our heart to God. Do we not realize what a true blessing it is to be able to talk to an infinite, all-powerful being; knowing that He loves us and wants to hear our prayers? I know earthly fathers wish to speak to their children, and are hurt if the children do not talk to them. How much more when it is our Heavenly Father who wishes for us to speak to Him, but we do not? Let us continue “*steadfastly in prayer*” (Rom. 12:12, NKJV).

### ***The Israelites Stayed Focused On Their Goal.***

“*They which builded on the wall, and they that bare burdens, with those that laded, every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon. .... And he that sounded the trumpet was by me. And I said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, The work is great and large, and we are separated upon the wall, one far from*

another. In what place therefore ye hear the sound of the trumpet, resort ye thither unto us: our God shall fight for us. So we laboured in the work: and half of them held the spears from the rising of the morning till the stars appeared. Likewise at the same time said I unto the people, Let every one with his servant lodge within Jerusalem, that in the night they may be a guard to us, and labour on the day. So neither I, nor my brethren, nor my servants, nor the men of the guard which followed me, none of us put off our clothes, saving that every one put them off for washing" (Neh. 4:17-23). What dedication! The people who worked on the wall were so focused on accomplishing their goal that they ate, slept, and worked in their clothes! The only time they took their clothes off was to bathe.

After considering the focus these people had, let us ask, how focused are we on going to Heaven? Is this first and foremost in our minds? Are we making decisions, and doing things which would be conducive to our going to Heaven? Jesus said "where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matt. 6:21). Where is your treasure? Paul tells us to, "seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God" (Col. 3:1). Are we doing this, or are we allowing the cares of this world to "detour" us along the way? Paul's attitude was: "forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:13-14). Is this our attitude? When was the last time you thought

about Heaven? Has it been today? Has it been in the last week?

Our eternal destiny is much more important than anything we accomplish on earth. The true success of a man or woman is seen, not in how much they have piled up on this earth, but in whether or not they see Heaven (Matt. 16:26)!

### ***The Israelites Wanted To Hear All Of God's Word.***

After completing the wall around Jerusalem, the people gather to worship God. "And all the people gathered themselves together ... and they spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the LORD had commanded to Israel. .... And he read therein ... from the morning until midday, before the men and the women, and those that could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law. .... And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people; ... and when he opened it, all the people stood up: .... they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading" (Neh. 8:1, 3, 5, 8). Notice that "all the people" were interested in hearing God's word. They "were attentive" to the word being read, they "stood up" with reverence to God, and God's word was expounded to the people.

Brethren, how attentive are we to God's word? Are we interested in having God's word read in our hearing? Are we interested in reading God's word at home? How much reverence do we show God's word? Are we the kind that merely tolerates God's word and sound teaching, or do we demand God's will be taught to us? There is a difference!

God's word: Produces faith (Rom. 10:17), Saves us (Rom. 1:16-17), Is the truth (Jn. 17:17), And is "quick and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword" (Heb. 4:12). With this in mind, may we never act flippantly toward God's word, nor question its necessity in our lives!

### ***Conclusion***

After Ezra and the priests expounded God's word to the people, we find the Israelites obeying God's word (Neh. 8:10-12, 14, 16, 18, 10:29). They knew what was expected of them and were obedient. What about us? Are we obedient to God's word (Heb. 5:8-9)? Do we realize that God will judge us based upon what we have done (Rom. 2:7-10; Ecc. 12:13)? Let us apply the valuable lessons taught by Nehemiah and the Israelite people. May we be obedient to the Lord, and be able to say with Nehemiah, "Remember me, O my God, for good" (Neh. 13:14, 22, 31).

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