THE BOOK OF NEHEMIAH
"The Welfare of Israel"
Nehemiah 2:9-16

Introduction

1. The kind of man the Lord uses is emphasized in the Book of Nehemiah. God's man is a priority!

2. But God's man has a nation (or people) with whom he is associated. Here the burden was the children of Israel and their major city, Jerusalem (1:2,3). God's man with God's message to God's people is the order (Haggai 1:13).

3. There are elements in the service of God illustrated in the life of Nehemiah. They stand out for the believer today who truly desires to serve the Lord. Mark these essentials:-

1. AUTHORIZATION v. 9.

The opening words of this verse are strategically placed: "then I came. . ." Nehemiah had talked with the Lord about his need (2:4) and then to the king (v.5). He had gained the support he needed (v. 7,8). These were used (v. 9b). There was no doubt that Nehemiah had royal approval for his mission. This is the way it must always be in the Lord's work. True, one is not to demean human support but what is of absolute importance is that God send the man into the work! God called Jeremiah (1:5) and Isaiah (6). The commission must be of God (Acts 13:1-4). You must be enabled to say with Paul -- "woe is me" (1 Cor. 9:16).

2. PREPARATION vv. 10, 13, 15.

Three days in Jerusalem without doing anything would have really soured some of the Lord's workers, but not Nehemiah. It gave him time to let the work of God sink into his heart. Indeed, God gave Nehemiah a heart for the work (v. 12). God prepared His man. (cf. Moses, Joshua, Jeremiah, Paul, etc.). Job did not reach his spiritual growth through a day's activity, but sitting in his sores and poverty and rejection! God knows best how to prepare His men! It must have b been a lonely preparation for it was a "night ride" and with "few men" and not one of five groups knew anything about his burden and concern. (v. 16). The Lord's work is often a thankless job, but it brings

thanks to God! Remember that time spent in preparation is not spent time!

3. OPPOSITION v. 10.

There is no place in all of God's service which does not have its problems of one sort or another. Pity the Christian worker who looks for the millennium now! Two figures are mentioned: Sanballat (who may have been a Moabite) and Tobiah, an Ammonite and servant probably raised to an official position. He never lost his designation as a servant (cf. Rahab, the harlot). These two men were "grieved" (Hebrew: cried with a loud voice of evil) because Nehemiah was concerned with the welfare (good) of the children of Israel. Whether is is someone seeking Jewish or Gentile benefit before God, it matters not. You can count on opposition from the Enemy IF you are seeking to do God's work. The sad commentary here is that the opposition came from people related to the Jews (cf. Gen. 19:30-38). It has often been the experience of God's people that opposition comes from within more than it does from without! Be prepared for it!

4. INSPECTION vv. 12-16.

There is a careful indication that God's man knew his field of service. He knew where to go. Some spiritual homework had been done. Think of the places mentioned in this text (valley gate, well, dung gate, fountain, pool, and brook. The verb "viewed" (v. 13) shows that he looked at the very field of service in which he was to operate. The verb means to "examine as a wound" which is fitting for the situation since the walls were broken and the gates burned (v. 13).

Conclusion The Lord's work is something to be desired (1 Tim. 3:1), but the essentials of the work ought to be known. The man of God with a heart will have a heart for the work.