

The Wall Completed

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[0:00] Last week, as we did the first 14 verses of chapter 6, we saw Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem try to stop the wall building again.

We saw them attack Nehemiah himself this time. First, they tried to lure Nehemiah out of Jerusalem under the pretense of peace talks. Nehemiah recognized the false pretense, and he refused their invitation four times.

He knew that without adequate leadership in Jerusalem, the people would speedily lapse back into their old ways. We've already seen that the priesthood was corrupted, and the rulers other than Nehemiah were greedy.

Exploitation would cause the morale to collapse, and dissension would again prevail. Nehemiah's place was in Jerusalem, and he knew that, so the whole matter became a matter of priorities for him.

Nehemiah's priority remained doing the task that God had called him to do, and that was rebuilding the wall. We mentioned last week that when people view God's work as that which is very important, they will not forsake it to be at other meetings or other events when they need to be doing God's work.

[1:19] And God's people everywhere can learn from that today, even. When Nehemiah refused to fall for the promise of a peace conference, Sanballat and company dropped all attempts to appear conciliatory with him.

Instead, they drafted an open letter to Nehemiah, claiming that he was planning to rebel against King Artaxerxes. They would, they promised, report this rebellion to the king unless Nehemiah met with them.

They wanted to make Nehemiah and the other Jews afraid, and to put Nehemiah on the defensive. The enemy often uses fear as a tactic to hinder the work of the Lord.

When force is not possible, it's still possible to make somebody afraid. The Jews' enemies found that the use of force was thwarted by the Jews, but they still could create fear in the Jews' hearts. So they bluffed the Jews by the false accusation of rebellion against Nehemiah, and then by other actions that were calculated to produce fear. We saw Nehemiah openly deny the allegations.

[2:21] Then he prayed and he stayed focused on the task at hand. We can learn something from how Nehemiah responded in verses 8 and 9 to Sanballat's threat.

There are times in our lives, too, when we find that those we encounter might malign our motives and alienate our subordinates, and even weaken our hold on the situation.

When this happens, an open denial of what is plainly false, and prayer are the only recourses that we have. We mentioned last week that fortunately for the true believer, prayer is the best recourse. So that's not a bad recourse to be left with when it's the best alternative anyway. Sanballat and Company's final attempt to undermine Nehemiah was designed to get Nehemiah to sin against God.

They bribed a priest to tell Nehemiah that people were coming at night to try to kill Nehemiah, and that priest urged Nehemiah to take refuge in the holy place of the temple.

[3:20] If Nehemiah had done that, he would have sinned against God because only priests were allowed in the holy place. Nehemiah knew God's word well enough to know that hiding in the temple was prohibited for him, and he knew God's will well enough to know that God would never ask Nehemiah to change course when he was so close to completing the task at hand.

That's especially so when Nehemiah had already seen numerous examples of how his work was being blessed by God. Like Nehemiah, our ability to perceive true from false will depend upon our knowledge of God's word.

Perception of true or false is not some gift that we just are born with without effort. It's an ability that we grow by being attentive to scripture, and that's an important thing for us to remember. We'll finish chapter 6 tonight, and we'll cover all but one verse of chapter 7. As we read the scripture, we'll immediately be able to tell that the work continued while the enemies were trying to attack Nehemiah.

That's because we see the wall completed. We'll go ahead and read some sections of today's scripture before we dive into the verses in detail. So let's start out by reading 6:15 to 7:6.

[4:39] Starting with Nehemiah 6:15, it says, So the wall was finished on the 25th day of Elul in 52 days, and it happened when all our enemies heard of it, and all the nations around us saw these things, that they were very disheartened in their own eyes, for they perceived that this work was done by our God.

Also in those days the nobles of Judah sent many letters to Tobiah, and the letters of Tobiah came to them. For many in Judah were pledged to him, because he was the son-in-law of Shekaniah, the son of Arah, and his son Johanan had married the daughter of Meshulam, the son of Berechiah. And they reported his good deeds before me, and reported my words to him. Tobiah sent letters to frighten me. Then it was when the wall was built, and I had hung the doors, when the gatekeepers, the singers, and the Levites had been appointed, that I gave the charge of Jerusalem to my brother Hanani, and Hananiah the leader of the citadel, for he was a faithful man and feared God more than many.

And I said to them, Do not let the gates of Jerusalem be opened until the sun is hot, and while they stand guard, let them shut and bar the doors, and appoint guards from among the inhabitants of Jerusalem, one at his watch station, and another in front of his own house.

Now the city was large and spacious, but the people in it were few, and the houses were not rebuilt. Then my God put it into my heart to gather the nobles, the rulers, and the people, that they might be registered by genealogy.

[6:18] And I found a register of the genealogy of those who had come up in the first return, and had found written in it, These are the people of the province who came back from the captivity of those who had been carried away, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away, and who returned to Jerusalem and Judea, or Judah, excuse me, everyone to his city.

Verses 7, 7 through 65 then list the people found during that early census. We'll cover the verses when we get to them, but we're not going to read every one of those verses.

For now, let's just skip to 7:66 to 7:72. 7:66 through 7:72 summarize the results of the census and what happened next.

So it says, Altogether, the whole assembly was 42,360, besides their male and female servants, of whom there were 7,337.

And they had 245 men and women singers. Their horses were 736, their mules 245, their camels 435, and donkeys 6,720.

[7:37] I'll pause there for a second because some commentators believe that verses 70 to 72 that are coming up next still pertain to the census that was done in Ezra's time.

Others believe that Nehemiah switches back to the present here to record what happened with his census, and we are going to treat those verses as if Nehemiah recorded what happened in his day. That seems the most likely thing there. Regardless, though, the application of the verses for us will be unchanged. So let's look at what 7:70 through 7:72 say.

And some of the heads of the fathers' houses gave to the work. The governor gave to the treasury 1,000 gold drachmas, 50 basins, and 530 priestly garments.

Some of the heads of the fathers' houses gave to the treasury of the work 20,000 gold drachmas, and 2,200 silver minas. And that which the rest of the people gave was 20,000 gold drachmas, 2,000 silver minas, and 77 priestly garments.

[8:42] If you remember back to the very beginning of Nehemiah, Nehemiah had received his brother's report about Jerusalem when he was in Susa in the month of Kislev in the winter of 444 B.C.

So Nehemiah then received permission to go to Jerusalem in the month of Nisan, which is our April. Preparation and travel took time, so he arrived in Jerusalem and began the work on what we would now call August 1st.

So 52 days later, on September 21st, the reconstruction of the massive wall was done, and we know that it was anywhere from one and a half to two and a half miles long. So the elapsed time from when he'd first heard about the problem until the wall was completed was only nine months. And the construction itself was completed in 52 days, so that's less than two months after he arrived in the city.

We've often talked about how Nehemiah's efforts demonstrated three things. He prayed, he planned, and he persevered. Now all of those efforts have paid off.

[9:56] As we dig into the verses tonight, we'll see Nehemiah acknowledge the reason for such a successful effort. We'll also see that despite his success, Nehemiah still had to deal with opposition.

So we're going to break tonight's passage into four sections. The first section comes in verses 6, 15 through 19, and there we see the completion of the project.

The completion of the project. We'll take these verses in small chunks. Look at verses 15 and 16 first.

He says, So the wall was finished on the 25th day of Elul in 52 days, and it happened when all our enemies heard of it, and all the nations around us saw these things, that they were very disheartened in their own eyes, for they perceived that this work was done by our God.

In the introduction, we talked about how impressive it is that the Israelites were able to complete the wall so quickly. If there was ever a time when Nehemiah could have been tempted to sit back and take credit for his success, it had to be now when the wall was completed.

[11:12] Notice, though, that he didn't take credit for his success. What he did instead shows really his greatness. We've seen how this work was accomplished in the face of opposition on the part of Nehemiah's enemies, and it's a lesson for us that Satan will deploy his arsenal of tricks to undo every attempt at obedience to God, and he'll also undo attempts to try to have affectionate displays of loyal love and service to God.

The project that Nehemiah watched over was a troubled one from the very beginning to the end, but its completion is a signal of the triumph of good over evil. One of the outcomes of this work was a great reversal of affairs.

Israel's enemies had tried to make Israel afraid, but instead, it was the enemies who became afraid. Verse 16 shows us that. That's the verse that says, When all our enemies heard of it, and all the nations around us saw these things, that they were very disheartened in their own eyes, for they perceived that this work was done by our God.

The enemies' pride was shattered, and their sense of self-importance was deflated because they realized that God really was with the people in Jerusalem. Nehemiah is not suggesting here that God really did a work of revival in Israel's enemies, or that they suddenly acknowledged faith in the God of Israel.

There's no evidence here in Scripture to suggest that, but even though it may not have led them to personal faith, they did acknowledge that God was among the Jews in Jerusalem.

[12:48] So we don't know whether any of Nehemiah's enemies were converted, but they were shaken by the events that they witnessed in Jerusalem. They were shaken enough to acknowledge that God was in the midst of the city.

When God does a mighty work anywhere, we know that unbelief trembles. Surely that same thing happens today when unbelievers see the outpouring of love by Christians, especially after times when maybe a community is ravaged by disaster, or when a notoriously ungodly person is converted, and we actually see that person's life changed for the better.

It's interesting when you think about it because human hands built the wall, and concurrently, as some theologians sometimes put it, God also built the wall.

Men and women did it, and God did it, so this is the grammar of providence. It's the same event viewed from two different perspectives, and it can be explained in very different ways depending on which of those perspectives you're looking at at the time.

It's also the same way with us because think about our salvation. We work out our salvation with fear and trembling because God is at work in us to do His will and to do His good pleasure.

[14:02] So God works the salvation in us, and we work out what that means. So in one sense, this two-fold explanation of providence is true of every event because everything is providential.

Everything in one form or another is God's work. We know, though, that some things appear as God's work in a special way, and that's either because we are certain that because of the

significance of the event or because the event itself can't be explained on any human level, we know that God really had to work a mighty event to do that.

As Nehemiah reports his achievement, he doesn't allow success to blind him to his continuing problems, or to say it another way, he doesn't pretend his success is greater than it really is. How many people today tend to overstate their success when they accomplish something? We see people a lot of times that are so pleased with their success that they won't admit any failures or imperfections.

Nehemiah does admit to some issues, though. In fact, it's the way chapter 6 ends. Here are verses 17 through 19 again. They say, Also in those days the nobles of Judah sent many letters to Tobiah, and the letters of Tobiah came to them.

[15 : 22] For many in Judah were pledged to him because he was the son-in-law of Shekariah, the son of Arah, and his son Johanan had married the daughter of Meshulam, the son of Berechiah. And they reported his good deeds before me and reported my words to him.

Tobiah sent letters to frighten me. We really can't tell fully what's going on in this report. We can tell, though, it's a realistic admission by Nehemiah of some continuing problems.

We know Tobiah has been a source of opposition all along. That's not going to change. Even when we get to the very last chapter of the book, we'll see Tobiah causing problems in chapter 13.

We see here why his opposition was particularly troublesome. One reason was that he was a Jew like Nehemiah. Two, he had profitable trading agreements with the wealthier classes in Jerusalem. And three, he was linked to the wealthier Jewish families by marriage. Think back a couple of chapters ago when Nehemiah confronted the greedy opposition.

[16 : 30] We remember it was the very wealthy families who had been oppressing the poor that Nehemiah had forced to back down. He also forced them to return what they'd extorted and to abandon their policies.

So certainly some of those people might well have continued to resent Nehemiah despite publicly saying that they had a change of heart. Tobiah maybe had some strong allies in those people and he was no doubt trying to draw all those people together again planning for the day when they could have the upper hand in Jerusalem instead of Nehemiah.

Nehemiah. When you think about it these disloyal people were really a wretched group. They ought to have done everything they could to encourage Nehemiah because he was actually working on their behalf.

His work had been for their benefit yet they had continually worked against him. Can we face similar issues today when we achieve success for God and through God?

Do people sometimes resent that success for us? You know even when they should be thankful for works done on behalf of God and through God some people do still resent that.

[17 : 41] Of course we know that we live in a sinful and wicked world and our calling to live our lives for the Lord Jesus Christ in that world is never ended. We need to remember that especially when we've achieved some important objective because it could be that when we've achieved that very important thing that might be when we're the most vulnerable to attack.

The completion of the walls though won't end Nehemiah's work in Jerusalem. It only changes the emphasis of his work. The rebuilding of the walls was essential to Jerusalem becoming a strong city again but once the walls were completed attention needed to be directed toward the administration of the city.

Jerusalem needed to be organized and set up as a well governed city. We'll see Nehemiah's skills in that area too. His skills in bringing about the construction of the walls were great but so were his skills in setting up Jerusalem as a well governed city.

The first thing Nehemiah does is find others to help him lead and we see that in the second lesson section. In verses 7, 1 through 3 Nehemiah designates the captains of the people.

So we see the captains of the people as our second point. Look at verses 7, 1 through 3 again and we'll see who those captains are. He says, Then it was when the wall was built and I had hung the doors, when the gatekeepers, the singers, and the Levites had been appointed, that I gave the charge of Jerusalem to my brother Hanani and Hananiah, the leader of the citadel, for he was a faithful man and feared God more than many.

[19 : 24] And I said to them, Do not let the gates of Jerusalem be opened until the sun is hot, and while they stand guard, let them shut and bar the doors, and appoint guards from among the inhabitants of Jerusalem, one at his watch station and another in front of his own house.

The first verses of chapter 7 tell us about three general categories of appointments that Nehemiah made. We see gatekeepers, singers, and Levites, and we see two specific ones.

We see that Nehemiah's brother Hanani was appointed as the civil leader of Jerusalem, while Nehemiah was still the governor of the province, and Hananiah was appointed as the military commander in charge of defending Jerusalem.

Watching over the city's defense and overseeing future reform needed men of practical insight and resourcefulness, as well as military competence. Godliness was paramount for these people, even for the military commander.

Hanani and Hananiah put the character of God first, and in that sense, they were God-fearing more than many. And here's a quote from John Witherspoon who signed the Declaration of Independence.

[20 : 39] He said, it is only the fear of God that can deliver us from the fear of man. Verse 3 shows that Nehemiah also took some prudent measures to protect the city.

That matches up to what we've seen from Nehemiah before. We know he relied on God in prayer, but then he also was very careful to take prudent measures to help himself.

So the gates of a city are normally opened at sunrise, but Nehemiah ordered Jerusalem's gates to be closed until the sun was high. This extra precaution would have discouraged enemies from mounting a surprise attack at sunrise.

And also, Nehemiah ordered the citizens of Jerusalem to organize a civil defense with people taking turns standing guard at night outside their own houses. Think about why this strategy would have been so clever.

The people would have been much more alert in guarding their own homes than they would if they had been guarding just a general part of the city that they didn't have any specific ties to. So with his leadership team in place, Nehemiah next sets out to determine how many people are in the city.

[21 : 52] And that's what we'll see in the third section of the lesson. We see the counting of the population. So the counting of the population is what we'll look at next.

Look at verses 4 through 6 of chapter 7. Nehemiah wrote, Now the city was large and spacious, but the people in it were few, and the houses were not rebuilt.

Then my God put it into my heart to gather the nobles, the rulers, and the people that they might be registered by genealogy. And I found a register of the genealogy of those who had come up in the first return and found written in it, These are the people of the province who came back from the captivity of those who had been carried away, whom Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, had carried away, and who returned to Jerusalem and Judah, everyone to his city.

One of Nehemiah's projects after completing the rebuilding of the wall was to increase the population of Jerusalem. We see the need for the increase in the population right at the beginning of our text for this section.

Verse 4 says, The city was large and spacious, but the people in it were few, and the houses were not rebuilt. The first sentence of verse 5 tells us why Nehemiah wanted to conduct a census.

[23 : 16] He said, Then my God put it into my heart to gather the nobles, the rulers, and the people that they might be registered by genealogy. The source of Nehemiah's prompting tells us what Nehemiah was prompted to do was a good thing.

When God inspires our actions, we can be sure that those actions will be good actions. The end of verse 5 gives another example of God's providence at work for Nehemiah.

The last clause of verse 5 says, And I found a register of the genealogy of those who had come up in the first return. Providence is always present in one way or another with what God commands. When God moves our heart to take some specific action, we can be sure that his providence will be adjusted where necessary to enable that action. Nehemiah was prompted by God to review the genealogy of the people, but he couldn't have done that if he lacked some of the records by which to review that genealogy, and God provided those records by helping Nehemiah find the register of the census that was done on the first return.

The catalog of genealogies in our text here is nearly a carbon copy of the genealogies recorded in Ezra chapter 2. There are some minor differences in some numbers and some names, but that really doesn't present any problem regarding the accuracy of scripture.

[24 : 46] Instead, the double record enables us to get a more perfect catalog than we could have obtained from either record separately. The Hebrew word translated register here means literally a roll or a scroll of writing.

It could have easily been an updated copy of the genealogies that were found in Ezra 2. If we were honest, and if we are honest with each other, we know that genealogies in scripture are not the most important or interesting reading to us.

All scripture is equally inspired of God, but not all scripture is equally important. And even though this is of some lesser importance than other scripture, the genealogies were vital for the Jews in Nehemiah's day because that's what they used to establish a claim for such things as position of service, privileges, and inheritance.

And even though the genealogies are of lesser importance to us, the genealogies still give us some good practical lessons, and we can discover some of that as we look at our text tonight.

Verses 7 through 65 discuss the register that Nehemiah found, and James Montgomery Boyce points out that those names can be grouped into nine categories.

[26 : 05] You have each of those nine categories listed in your handout, and rather than reading every verse, we'll discuss the verses grouped by each of the nine categories.

First, we see the original readers. We see that in verses 6 and 7. So those original leaders are some people that we don't know, all of them, but we do know at least two of them.

And the first two are very well known and important. They're Zerubbabel, the civil leader, and Yeshua, or Joshua, the religious leader. And they brought together the first body of exiles after King Cyrus permitted their return.

So these rulers figure strongly in the last two books of the Old Testament, the minor prophets Haggai and Zechariah. And Zerubbabel was from the royal line of Judah, and from Joshua or Yeshua, there descended 14 successive generations of high priests.

So you can see that two of those original leaders were very important. The second category we see comes in verses 8 through 38.

[27 : 17] And this is a long and numerically significant list. And it has two parts. The first part lists 18 individuals from whom the then living descendants came.

The second part lists 20 towns in which the returning exiles settled. The introduction to the census suggests that these were the towns from which the families of the people had come from originally.

The third group we see in the text comes in verses 39 through 42, and those are the priests. The priests were the descendants of Aaron, who of course was Moses' brother.

They were responsible for the service of the great temple altar and aspects of the feast. David had organized the priest into 24 families, each responsible for a two- or three-week tour of temple duty. Nehemiah's list mentions only four of these families. Presumably those four are the ones who returned. And according to the Talmud, these were later reorganized into a new set of 24 rotating groups using the original Davidic names.

[28 : 24] Nehemiah lists just over 4,000 priests, about one-tenth of the total census. The fourth category, and it covers just one verse, is the Levites.

The Levites were descendants of Levi. I bet you were really looking forward to learning that part tonight. But the Levites were one of the original twelve patriarchs, and Levi was one of the original twelve patriarchs.

The Levites also served in rotations, and their job was to assist the priest descended from Aaron. Surprisingly, a small number is listed here, meaning that only a minority of the Levites had returned from Babylon.

The fifth group is the group of singers. The singers, like the gatekeepers who follow, were taken from among the Levites, and their task was to assist in the temple worship.

We see the singers in verse 44. The gatekeepers are listed in verse 45. The Levite singers and gatekeepers were the categories of the temple staff appointed by Nehemiah, according to verse 1.

[29 : 34] And they were not the people mentioned by name here, of course. The people mentioned by name were from the descendants of the people in this census. The seventh group is the group of temple servants.

The temple servants assisted the Levites, just like the Levites assisted the priest. The Gibeonites had been appointed to this role after they had deceived the Israelites at the time of the conquest, so these might actually have been the Gibeonites descendants that had now been incorporated into the nation.

The eighth group makes up the descendants of the servants of Solomon. We see that group in verses 57 through 60, and this group was closely linked to the previous one, and a common total

serves for both groups.

The ninth group and last group were those whose ancestry was questionable. We see them in verses 61 through 65, and they were in two categories, laymen and people who claimed to be priests but couldn't prove that they were priests.

The situation of the priest was very serious because it involved matters of ritual purity and contamination for the whole people. So they made a decision to exclude these people from priestly functions until their case could be decided by submitting to the sacred casting of lots known as the Urim and Thummim.

[30 : 58] Verses 66 through 69 summarize the census, so look at what those verses say. They say, Altogether, the whole assembly was 42,360, besides their male and female servants, of whom there were 7,337, and they had 245 men and women singers.

Their horses were 736, their mules 245, their camels 435, and donkeys 6,720.

How would you like to be the person who counted all of those animals? Now that we've done an overview of the verses, let's think about what we can learn from them.

These people were ancestors of the people of Nehemiah's day, and we should note their faith and their small number. So just pause a minute here on the fact that they were ancestors of the people in Nehemiah's day.

It might be pretty boring for us to read those names, but if you were there with Nehemiah, it could be very encouraging to be reminded of all of your relatives that had come over in the first return and had really paved the way for you to be able to rebuild the city.

[32 : 14] So we can learn about their faith and their small number, and so think about this. After 70 years of captivity in Babylon, it would have taken a lot of faith in God to come back to Judah to live.

These people would have had to believe strongly in the promises of God concerning Israel and would have had to have been interested in the worship of God to come back to the land. We know that the worship of God was an important matter to the returnees because one of the very first things this first group did was to begin building a new temple to replace the temple that had been destroyed by the Babylonians.

In fact, it was the building of the temple that is cited as a prime motive for the return to Israel by the Jews. The genealogies that Nehemiah reviewed showed not only their faith, it also showed that the group was small compared to what Israel used to be.

The 42,000 or so may seem large to us at first because the total is more than Bartlesville and Dewey combined, but compare the 42,000 to the population of Israel at the Exodus.

Exodus 12, 37 says, Then the children of Israel journeyed from Ramses to Succoth, about 600,000 men on foot besides children. So we had just 600,000 men in Israel at the time of the Exodus, and when we add in the women and children, most people think that the population of Israel at the Exodus was approximately 2 million.

[33 : 43] So the small number of those returning to the land, the 42,000 compared to 2 million or so in the Exodus, really shows that many Jews had been able to settle down rather comfortably in Babylon, and they'd lost their zeal for God's land and God's work.

The majority of their brethren preferred their position among the heathen to the honor and peril of reestablishing their nation in their own land. That's really not unlike what we see today, is it?

We see a lot of people today comfortable to live among society rather than setting themselves apart and living for God. It's amazing that thousands of years later, human nature is still the same, even though we live in more modern times than these people did.

We have one more section to cover tonight, and so far we've seen the completion of the project, the captains of the people, and the counting of the population. In verses 70 through 72, we see the consolidation of the provisions.

So the consolidation of the provisions. Starting with verse 70, it says, And some of the heads of the fathers' houses gave to the work. The governor gave to the treasury 1,000 gold drachmas, 50 basins, and 530 priestly garments.

[35 : 07] Some of the heads of the fathers' houses gave to the treasury of the work 20,000 gold drachmas, and 2,200 silver minas, and that which the rest of the people gave was 20,000 gold drachmas, 2,000 silver minas, and 67 priestly garments.

The final action taken by Nehemiah in his attempt to consolidate his earlier work and to prepare for the task to come was to provide for those who would now be working in the temple.

We already talked about how a number of the wealthier Jewish families were teamed up with Tobiah. Nehemiah said so at the end of chapter 6.

They would be hostile to Nehemiah's plans and reforms, but we have to acknowledge here, in fairness to the rich, not all were opposed to Nehemiah. Otherwise, where would the considerable wealth mentioned in verses 70 through 72 have come from?

It's difficult to evaluate the true purchasing power of these ancient sums of money, but scholars estimate that the families of Israel gave gold and silver worth in today's currency more than five million dollars.

[36 : 18] So that was a huge amount of gold and silver. That made a considerable endowment for the temple service, and Nehemiah's care to provide it showed that although he was a layman, he cared not only for secular matters, but for the spiritual work and the spiritual well-being of the people as well.

Many of those who have given much time and energy and material goods to the Lord's work have gone unnoticed by men. But God notices this giving. These verses show that God will in due time give recognition and reward to people, even if that recognition and reward comes after this life ends.

So we've already seen many great traits of leadership in Nehemiah, and we saw four more tonight. First, he realized the need for new leaders and worked to seek out and appoint them.

Second, he knew that new leaders needed clear and proper guidelines to be effective. Although he was delegating the work, he was still in charge. And third, he knew that God's work must be supported financially.

The fourth thing he learned was that unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it. Unless the Lord guards the city, the watchman stays awake in vain.

[37 : 37] That's a lesson that every true leader needs to learn, both in his personal life and in what he seeks to accomplish for the Lord. The verse I just quoted, of course, was Psalm 127.1.

So listen to that verse one more time and let it really sink in. It says, unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it. Unless the Lord guards the city, the watchman stays awake in vain.