

# Let's Do A Good Work

## Preface

America is in a mess.

American's are seekers of instant gratification and wealth as evidenced by the overwhelming growth in the gambling industry. Did you know that 35 different states now have casinos? I tried to find a total number of casinos in the US but gave up counting state by state. Our own state has one but our neighboring state has twenty five. Nationwide there are hundreds if not over a thousand casinos and that does not include race tracks.

It bewilders me that we have money to gamble away yet we are a nation so deeply in debt. It is sad that people throw their money away on temporary entertainment when there is so much good to be done especially through the church.

Our divorce rate is through the roof. Alcohol consumption is at an all time high. We are losing the war on drugs. Adult parents are neglecting their children for their own personal pleasures. Most of our manufacturing jobs have gone overseas. Our economy teeters on failure. Our national leaders are habitual liars. And any mention of God is prohibited from our schools and other public places.

How in the world did America find itself in such an ugly mess?

I don't have the complete answer to that question. But I do know God is calling his people to come to the rescue. God calls on you and me to rebuild His kingdom in America.

## Scripture

*"<sup>17</sup> 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."<sup>18</sup> I also told them about the gracious hand of my God upon me and what the king had said to me. They replied, "Let us start rebuilding." So they began this good work."*

*Nehemiah 2:17-18 NIV*

## Introduction

The setting is about 500 years before the time of Christ. God had told his people; "Obey Me and you will live in the land for a long time. Disobey Me and you will be carried off into captivity." God was true to His word.

Because of the disobedience of the people of Israel, God allowed their virtual destruction. The city was destroyed in 586 B.C by Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians. The Babylonians conquered God's people and took their leading citizens miles away to be servants. There remained only a remnant.

Since that time the people of Israel had tried to rebuild the city on occasion. However, their efforts were thwarted as they became overwhelmed by the brevity of the task and interference from their enemies.

Never under estimate the warnings of God's word. In your mind you can dress God up like Santa but He is still God the Creator. He is sovereign and He will discipline His people.

But the time for discipline was coming to an end. God's people were now returning to Jerusalem only to find a mess. The condition of this holy city was a shame and a disgrace to God and His people.

God was ready to do a good work through His people. God's people were ready to repent and begin rebuilding the Kingdom of God. Nehemiah was called to lead this great work.

I believe God desires to do the same in America today. I believe with all of my heart that God is calling His people to revival. God is calling His church to do a good work for Him.

Nehemiah gives us an example of how to do a good work for the kingdom of God?

## 1. Recognize the Need

In verse 17 Nehemiah expresses very clearly that Jerusalem was in trouble. In fact he states, "The city lies in ruins."

Looking back at the verses preceding our text, we find that Nehemiah had not come to this conclusion lightly. He had been told of the condition of the city. But just hearing had not been enough. After traveling to the city and being there three days, Nehemiah set out by night and completely surveyed the situation

for himself. It was after careful consideration that he came the conclusion that the city was in ruins.

In order to do a good work for our Lord, we must carefully survey the circumstances and recognize the needs. Have you surveyed the needs in the work of the Lord?

Illus: There's much excitement about the movie Fireproof. A small group of people at Sherwood Baptist Church in Albany, Georgia read a survey that said more people were influenced by movies today than by church. In response, they saw a need and began taking steps to produce movies with powerful Christian messages.

What need have you surveyed? What need has God placed on your heart? There are many needs right here in our church. We need faithful Sunday School teachers. We need people to help with our children's ministry, senior's ministry, and music ministry. We need help with the renovations to the old building. We need carpentry, plumbing, painting and all sorts of help.

We need financial help in our church. We need believers who will faithfully give to support the ministries of this church.

Are you thinking that none of those areas appeal to you? What have you surveyed and recognized needs your attention?

Too often we want to work where we get recognition or where we have talents. Too often we want to serve where our interests lie. God has a place of service for you and he has a blessing in store for you but you must recognize the need.

Nehemiah heard the need and he became emotional and passionate about the circumstance. He became so touched that he wept, fasted and prayed.

<sup>2</sup> *Hanani, one of my brothers, came from Judah with some other men, and I questioned them about the Jewish remnant that survived the exile, and also about Jerusalem.* <sup>3</sup> *They said to me, "Those who survived the exile and are back in the province are in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been burned with fire."* <sup>4</sup> *When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven. Nehemiah 1:2-4 NIV*

Nehemiah was a King's Cupbearer. He had a cushion job. He could have easily reasoned that rebuilding the city walls was beneath him. But Nehemiah listened to God and recognized the need.

## 2. Recognize God's Hand

When the spirit of God speaks to our hearts and we clearly recognize a need, the next step is to recognize God's hand.

In conveying the urgency of his vision to the people of Israel, Nehemiah in verse 18 says, *"I also told them about the gracious hand of my God upon me and what the king had said to me."*

In chapter 1 we find that Nehemiah became deeply burdened about the city of Jerusalem. Immediately he began to pray and seek God's leadership. In doing so he spoke openly. He spoke to God about his sin and his inabilities. He sought God's power to open the doors of opportunity. This work could never be accomplished by man alone.

Nehemiah had no idea how king Artaxerxes would respond to a request to leave his service. He didn't have to wait for the right moment. God's hand was in this work and God prompted the king to inquire about what saddened Nehemiah. God led the Artaxerxes not only to grant permission but to provide resources and a cavalry to escort Nehemiah.

Perhaps God's hand has been leading you to a place of service. God has given you a special calling and a heart for a certain area of ministry. Perhaps God has already begun to open doors in the direction of your vision. You must recognize when God's hand is at work in your life.

Illus: When I first returned as Pastor at BBC, I knew we needed another staff member to at least work with our youth. At the same time I had a vision of not just a youth minister but a minister to families. In my prayers I asked God to send us someone and to do it quickly. I spoke with God openly and said we cannot afford to go months or a year without someone. One day another minister overheard me talking about interviewing someone and he gave me Jason's name. In less than a month Jason was on staff. From the first email to Jason's situation to the housing, God's hand was in the process.

Have you recognized God's hand at work in your life? If you have do not ignore it. If you have not, seek God's face and beseech Him to do a work in your life.

Why do we often ignore God's prompting? Sin and fear of lifestyle change hold us back. You may know God is calling but you are fearful of what changes and work will be required.

### 3. Recognize the Timing

After we recognize the need and we recognize God's hand in the vision, we must recognize the timing.

When we talk about prayer, we often say that sometimes God gives us answers immediately and sometimes he says wait on my timing. This is true. However, perhaps the most frightening answer we get from God is "Let's Do it!"

Very often when God divinely calls us to serve, the window of opportunity is small. The time to act is now.

Unfortunately, many people fail to serve God because of their procrastination. What opportunities have existed in your past to do something great for the kingdom of God but you procrastinated?

Illus: Vance Havener said, "You have not really learned a commandment until you have obeyed it. The church suffers today from Christians who know volumes more than they practice."

Stop waiting for someone to ask you, motivate you or stroke you. Start a good work today. What does God call upon you to do.

Illus: I watched a few weeks ago as the AWANA children played hot potato with a bean bag. Most Christians play hot potato with their callings from God.

As Pastor I see this first hand on a regular basis. I have some people come to me with all sorts of ideas for ministry. Very often they have heard about something that is being done in another church or city and they are moved. But they approach me as if they want to hand the calling off to me. I always try to encourage them to pray and pursue how we might get involved. I usually suggest that this would be something good for them to head up. Most of the time I see that look in their face as though to say, "I don't want to do it I just thought it might be something you or the church could do." I want to say, "But God gave it to you. He didn't place it on my heart, he placed it on your heart."

Occasionally, someone will come to me and say something has been on their heart and they feel led to do something about it and they do. I thank God for those people. Thank God for people who hear the call and act upon it now.

If God leads you to it, then most likely God wants you to do it and he will equip you for the task. You are the one uniquely called and you must be the one to act upon the calling.

Don Cousins in an article on church leadership says, "A church made up of contributors is a true church; one made up of consumers is only a country club." May we have a church of contributors who act now upon the call from God.

There is a time to pray and fast. But there is also a time to act. Nehemiah surveyed and recognized the need. Nehemiah recognized that God's hand was upon this vision. And, Nehemiah recognized the timing was now. Note the text says; "*So they began this good work.*"

Let's recognize the need, recognize God's hand and let us begin many good works in Barnwell Baptist Church.

### Conclusion

Illus: Sometimes a little ease dropping pays off. This past Tuesday I had lunch by myself at the Biscuit King. There was a group of people sitting near me and as they began to get up and walk out, I overheard one of the men say something about being out from under pressure. Then a lady in response said, "Yes but with the pressure gone the opportunity is gone."

I thought about that statement and was reminded of just how true it is. When God is tugging on our hearts to serve Him, the pressure is on. While some just want to be out from under the pressure, others see great opportunity to do a good work.

What opportunity is God presenting to you?