



EXPLORE THE BIBLE.

Acts 1 – 12 Sermon Series

Supports Session 3: United

Sermon Title: “Strengthened Through Unity” (Nehemiah 2:11-20)

Connection to Session 3

We discover a great deal of unity when the church was formed in Acts 2. We can also find a great deal of unity in the Old Testament when Nehemiah began to rebuild the destroyed walls around Jerusalem. In both the Old and New Testament examples, people were united around a vision, united in service, and united in praise.

Introduction/Opening

It has been said that a single horse can pull up to 8,000 pounds. One might conclude that a pair of horses could pull up to 16,000 pounds. This would not be accurate. A pair of horses working together can pull up to 24,000 pounds. This shows the power of being united in accomplishing a single goal. We are not learning about horses this morning, but we are learning about being united in vision, service, and praise. Nehemiah united a people around one project. As the people came together, the project was completed in 52 days and God received all the praise.

Outline

- I. **United in vision (vv. 11-16).** Nehemiah left Susa (1:1), where he had been serving as the cupbearer to the king. He did this because he had learned the walls of Jerusalem were destroyed. He was returning to rebuild the walls so that God’s people would no longer be a disgrace (2:17).

Upon arriving in Jerusalem, he found that the walls of Jerusalem had been broken down and its gates had been destroyed by fire (v. 13). The original language shows that the walls were destroyed. Nehemiah did not discover a few minor holes that needed repair. As he began to understand the gravity of the task ahead, he cast a vision for the work. Verse 17a shows us that he communicated the trouble they were in, and he did not soften the language in any way.

While we do not have walls around our city or town to protect us, we may believe that we are in trouble today. We have strayed from God and need Him. We do not need another self-help book to read or class to attend. We need to repent and return to Christ. It is time for the church to boldly and lovingly proclaim the truth that Jesus is our only hope. The people of Nehemiah’s day united around the vision of restoring

the walls. As a church, let's unite around the Great Commandment (Matt. 22:37-40) and Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20). Let's trust God to use us as we strive to follow Him.

II. United in service (vv. 17-18). It is all too easy to point out a problem. We can watch the news and point out problem after problem. The difficult part is proposing a solution to the problem and getting others to join us in fulfilling the solution. Nehemiah pointed out the disrepair of the walls. He followed this with, "Come, let's rebuild Jerusalem's wall" (v. 17). It is important to observe the corporate nature of the call. Nehemiah did not say that he was going to rebuild the wall. Nor did he indicate that he was going to supervise the reconstruction as others rebuilt the wall. He was calling everyone to a vision and offering everyone a part in serving towards the fulfillment of that vision.

The response was beyond compare. "They said, 'Let's start rebuilding,' and their hands were strengthened to do this good work" (v. 18). Those who heard the call did not form a committee to study the implications of the vision as well as timing. They did not even post it on social media in a call to prayer. They knew the work needed to be done. They knew the vision and understood the calling that had been articulated. They said yes.

The vision and calling for the church today are found in the Great Commandment and Great Commission. Our community is in desperate need of the gospel of Jesus Christ. God called the church to fulfill His commands. Yes, we can pray as we go, but we need not ask God if this is what we are supposed to do. He has already called us, and we can serve Him together as we live out His commands.

III. United in praise (vv. 19-20). As soon as everyone started serving together the criticism began. A small group of naysayers started to mock and despise those who were faithfully serving. While we wish groups like this were only found in the Old Testament, we understand that the same thing can happen today. The critics, however, did not stop the group from serving, and the critics today should not stop us from serving either.

Those who were serving were also unified in their praise to God. Nehemiah said that the God of the heavens is the One who would grant the group success. Nehemiah did not want to take the credit, nor did he want anyone else to take the credit. He understood that all credit was due to God and Him alone. In Nehemiah 8, the people experienced a time of worship and praise to God when the wall was restored in 52 days.

Conclusion

We learned in our groups this morning the results of a united church when it began in Acts 2. Now we see an Old Testament example of a unified group that was able to restore something that was destroyed, and God was the One who received all the credit. The key was being united in vision and service. God has given His church a vision and that is to fulfill the Great Commandment and Great Commission. Let's unite around His calling and trust in His provision even if we encounter naysayers. As we do this, we all need to be quick to give Him all the glory because He is the only One who deserves it.

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