

## Fourth Quarter Strategies – Saturday, July 29, 2017

One of my favorite accounts in the bible can be found in the book of Nehemiah. There are two main characters in this book which deals with an extremely interesting period in the history of the Israelites. Near the end of the seventy year captivity in Babylon, we are introduced to the cupbearer of the King of Persia. Nehemiah had received word that the remnant in Jerusalem was in great trouble and the wall surrounding the city was broken down and all the gates had been burned.

After much prayer, Nehemiah went to the King of Persia and boldly asked permission to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the walls. The king surprisingly listened and provided him with letters allowing him to gather all the supplies needed to complete the rebuilding of the wall. Upon arriving in Jerusalem and assessing the situation, he quickly realized there would be great opposition and the task would be immense. His major support came from a scribe and priest named Ezra who had been called by God to re-build the temple. These two godly men with the prompting of the Lord led a successful rebuilding of the wall and the temple in Jerusalem.

We are also introduced to several enemies in this biblical account and I'm reminded of a verse in 1 Peter 5:8, which tells us *"Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings."* Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite relentlessly did everything in their power to deceive and discourage Nehemiah in the rebuilding of the wall. As a Christian businessman, I've always admired Nehemiah for his diligence and perseverance in sticking to the task at hand.

Amazingly, the wall around Jerusalem was completed in only fifty-two days. Even Israel's enemies realized that this great accomplishment could only have been completed so quickly with the help of God. All the surrounding nations feared the Israelites from this day forward. A time of celebration and praise followed and Nehemiah and Ezra re-established the reading of the Law and the observance of all the feasts that had not been celebrated since the captivity.

Please consider reading the three final historical books of Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther to fully grasp what transpired during this special time in Jewish history. I truly believe studying these three fairly short books can greatly benefit us in our Christian walk. Whether you are in your own business or just dealing with the everyday challenges of life, we must remain strong in our faith and trust our Lord as we persevere. We'd be wise to not take on such tasks simply on your own. Having other Christians by your side can be crucial.

Obviously Nehemiah and Ezra were obedient to the Lord and remained in His will. God has a purpose for each of us and we need to find His will for our lives. In Matthew 7:7-8 Jesus instructs us to *"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened."*

If you are not asking, seeking and knocking, I strongly suggest you consider doing so. Without the Lord in the midst of whatever you do, you may not be on the path God wants you to take in life. For a time you may feel all is going well, but eventually you will discover the words of Solomon found in Ecclesiastes are true. *"Vanity of vanities! All is vanity."*

Passages to Ponder: Ezra 6:13-15; Jeremiah 29:11; Proverbs 3:5-6; Ecclesiastes 2:10-11; Luke 11:9-10; Philippians 2:13

© 2017, all rights reserved. Note: Jim Langley has been an agent with New York Life since 1983 and an active member of CBMC of Santa Barbara since 1987. These "Fourth Quarter Strategies" discussions are designed to "light a fire" under Christian business and professional men so we might be more effective in the marketplace for the sake of Christ, our Lord and Savior! Please visit our website @ <http://www.fourthquarterstrategies.com>.

**Passages to Ponder: Ezra 6:13-15; Jeremiah 29:11; Proverbs 3:5-6; Ecclesiastes 2:10-11; Luke 11:9-10; Philippians 2:13**

**Ezra 6:13-15** New International Version (NIV)

<sup>13</sup>Then, because of the decree King Darius had sent, Tattenai, governor of Trans-Euphrates, and Shethar-Bozenai and their associates carried it out with diligence. <sup>14</sup>So the elders of the Jews continued to build and prosper under the preaching of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah, a descendant of Iddo. They finished building the temple according to the command of the God of Israel and the decrees of Cyrus, Darius and Artaxerxes, kings of Persia. <sup>15</sup>The temple was completed on the third day of the month Adar, in the sixth year of the reign of King Darius.

**Jeremiah 29:11** New International Version (NIV)

<sup>11</sup>For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

**Proverbs 3:5-6** New International Version (NIV)

<sup>5</sup>Trust in the LORD with all your heart  
and lean not on your own understanding;  
<sup>6</sup>in all your ways submit to him,  
and he will make your paths straight.

**Ecclesiastes 2:10-11** New International Version (NIV)

<sup>10</sup>I denied myself nothing my eyes desired;  
I refused my heart no pleasure.  
My heart took delight in all my labor,  
and this was the reward for all my toil.  
<sup>11</sup>Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done  
and what I had toiled to achieve,  
everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind;  
nothing was gained under the sun.

**Luke 11:9-10** New International Version (NIV)

<sup>9</sup>"So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. <sup>10</sup>For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.

**Philippians 2:13** New International Version (NIV)

<sup>13</sup>for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.