

(Through the Bible) Nehemiah 1-7

by Chuck Smith

Nehemiah's love for Jerusalem and his prayer life led him to seek God's guidance and protection as he worked to restore and rebuild the city.

Duration: 1:04:44

Scripture: Deuteronomy 4:29, Nehemiah 1:8, Psalm 23:4, Psalm 42:11

Topics: "Overcoming Fear", "Faith And Trust"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker addresses the issue of discouragement and fear that can hinder people from pursuing the word of God. He encourages the listeners to remember the Lord as the cure for fear and to not be afraid of the attacks and harassment they may face. The speaker shares examples from the Bible, such as David's trust in God in the face of danger, to illustrate the importance of remembering the Lord in times of fear. He also mentions the story of Nehemiah, who remained focused on the work of God despite attempts to distract and intimidate him. The sermon emphasizes the need to trust in God's protection and not allow fear to hinder one's faith and obedience.

Transcript

Let's turn to Nehemiah for our study this evening. Nehemiah introduces himself in the first verse of chapter one and the date of the writing of his prophecy, the 20th year of Artaxerxes, which was the stepson of Queen Esther. So the book of Esther, if you were writing in a chronological order, would fit somewhere between Ezra and Nehemiah.

The Artaxerxes here is actually the stepson of Esther, son of Artaxerxes, the husband of Esther. And so in the 20th year would be in the 20th year of the reign of this particular Artaxerxes. Esther would fit before Ezra and Nehemiah actually.

So you're in the 20th year of the reign of Artaxerxes. They're in the palace of Susa or Shushan and his brother, Hanani, and we learn from chapter seven that he is actually a brother to Nehemiah, had been to Jerusalem. And when he returned from Jerusalem, Nehemiah was questioning him concerning the state and the condition of the holy city.

Now, Nehemiah was born in captivity. In fact, it is now almost 90 years after the first of the captives have returned to Israel. In 536, Cyrus gave the commandment to return to Israel and rebuild the temple.

And this is about 445 BC. So it's about 90 years later, 91 years later. And so it is 160 years since the beginning of the Babylonian captivity.

So Nehemiah has never seen Jerusalem. He has never seen the temple. And yet, within his heart, he identifies with Jerusalem and with the temple.

A psalm of captivity is Psalm 137. The psalm begins that those that were captive in Babylon hung their harps on the willow tree and they sat down and cried by the great river. And in that psalm, there is that cry, if I forget the old Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning and let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth.

It is interesting how that God has stamped Jerusalem into the hearts of every Jew, even those that have never seen it. Somehow there is stamped into their heart a love for Jerusalem. And it's just a part of them.

They really can't help it. It is just a part, something that God has embedded in their heart, a great love and desire for Jerusalem. Of course, they are commanded in the scripture to pray for the peace of Jerusalem.

And in their Passover celebrations, no matter where they are in the world, as they observe the Passover, they make the statement this year here, next year, Jerusalem. And it seems to be the desire and the dream of every Jew to go to Jerusalem. I received a letter the other day from a very good friend of ours, David Aziel.

Many of you know David who have been on tours with us to Israel. And he was planning to come to California this summer, but he didn't make it because they were able to buy a piece of property in Jerusalem to build themselves a house. And he started writing about the thrill that they were experiencing being able to own a piece of property in Jerusalem.

And he went on this holy, beautiful city that God has chosen. And he really started waxing eloquent in his letter to us all about Jerusalem. It's just something in their heart.

They can't help it. It's there. It's something that God has planted within them.

And there is something about the city. There's a, there's an aura, there's a charm, there's a magic to it. That the first time you see it, you just sort of weep without being able to control yourself.

There's just something about it. So this is Jerusalem. And, and there's a feel, there's something there that is, is of God.

God said He would never take His eyes from Jerusalem. And so Nehemiah, a true patriot, having never seen Jerusalem, still his heart is there, his desires are there. And so he questioned his brother all about the state of Jerusalem, the state of the, the city and the people and all.

And, and he received really a very discouraging report from Hanani. The remnant of the people are left, are discouraged. Their enemies are harassing them.

The gates of the city have been burned. The walls are lying in rubble. There's great affliction and reproach upon the people.

And so it came to pass when Nehemiah heard these things, that he wept and he mourned for certain days and he fasted and prayed before the God of heaven. So this brought him great sorrow of heart and being

a true patriot, hearing of the saddened condition of Jerusalem, he wept, mourned over it, and then fasted for certain days while he prayed. Now, Nehemiah was a man of prayer and he is always offering up prayers unto God.

And through the book, it is one of the important aspects of your study of the book of Nehemiah is to make note of the prayer life of Nehemiah. Not always necessarily long prayers, sometimes just prayers under his breath in a moment of time when things are transpiring and he needs special wisdom or guidance, just Lord guide me or Lord strengthen me or Lord help me at this point, but always throwing up these little prayers to the Lord. Now his prayer is given to us here in chapter one.

And I said, I beseech thee, O Lord, God of heaven, the great and awesome God that keeps his covenants of mercy for those that love him and those that keep his commandments. Now, in his prayer, he is acknowledging the faithfulness of God. God, you keep your promises, you keep your covenants to your people.

And he acknowledges that the destruction of Jerusalem and the captivity of the people was a part of God's righteous keeping of his word, acknowledging the fact that God had warned them that if they would forsake the Lord, that they would be forsaken of the Lord. They had the warnings and Nehemiah in his prayer unto God recognizes and acknowledges God's faithfulness. Lord, you told us through Moses that if we would turn from thee, that we would be driven from the land and all, and he acknowledges the faithfulness of God to his word.

But then God had also promised that if the people would turn to him, that he would restore them to the land. And so he is reminding God of the promises that God had made unto the people. Remember, I beseech thee, the word that you commanded your servant, Moses saying, if you transgress, I will scatter you abroad.

But if you turn unto me and keep my commandments and do them, though there were of you those that were cast out into the uttermost parts of the earth, yet I will bring thee back again. And so the reminding God of his promises and of his word, and then asking God to bless the people and to show his great hand of power towards them. So he went in after several days to the king, bearing the cup of Artaxerxes, for Nehemiah was the king's cupbearer.

And so we are now moving ahead. You remember the story began in the month of December, and now we've moved ahead to April, and he is taking the cup into the king, and he is still troubled this much later over the condition of Israel. And the king asked him concerning his sadness, you've never been sad in my presence before.

What's wrong with you? And so Nehemiah opened up his heart. Actually, the king had asked him a question and the king discerned. He said, it's obviously a sorrow of heart.

What's wrong? And so Nehemiah answered, let the king live forever. And he told the king of the plight of his countrymen, those that had gone back and of the news that he had received and the heaviness of his heart because of the condition of Jerusalem, that beloved city. And so he said, I prayed unto the God of heaven and I said unto the king.

So he's talking to the king and then while he's talking, he throws up this prayer to God. And I prayed unto the God of heaven and I said unto the king, I'd like to have permission to go back for a period of time to

Jerusalem myself to see what I might be able to do to help the people there. And so the king says, well, how long are you going to be gone? And so he gave him a specified time to return.

And so the king gave unto him letters of authority and he was made the Tirthashah, which is the governor appointed that by the king to go back to Jerusalem and to be governor over that area. It turned out to be a period of 12 years that he had come back. And so the king gave to him the commandment to go back and to restore and to rebuild Jerusalem, the authority, the commandment.

Now, this is one of the most important dates in history, the date that the king gave the commandment to Nehemiah to restore and to rebuild Jerusalem, because we are told in Daniel, the ninth chapter, that there are 77 determined upon the nation Israel. And from the time of the commandment to restore and rebuild Jerusalem unto the coming of the Messiah, the prince would be seven sevens and 62 sevens or 483 years. So here on the 14th of March, 445 B.C., the commandment was given to Nehemiah to restore and to rebuild Jerusalem, one of the most important dates in the history of the world, because from this date, it can be ascertained the date of the coming of the Messiah.

It would be 483 years. Here is the commandment given for the restoration of Jerusalem, the rebuilding of the city. So just as was prophesied in the word of God, 483 years later, Babylonian years of 360 years.

Jesus came in his triumphant entry into the city of Jerusalem on April 6, 32 A.D. Now, Daniel said, but the Messiah will be cut off and receive nothing for himself and the people will be dispersed. And even as the prophecy of Daniel was so accurate, Jesus came the very day. So he was also cut off.

He was crucified without receiving the kingdom. And the Jews ended up in the dispersion, the dysphoria. So this is a very important date in history.

The king granted me, he said, according to the good hand of the Lord upon me. And so he came with some of the captains and the soldiers of the Persian army. And as he came, there were a couple of fellows, Tobiah and Sam Ballot, who were very upset over his coming.

One was a Moabite and the other was a Ammonite. The Horonite is actually from the Horon in Moab. And they were immediately antagonistic to Nehemiah because he sought the welfare of the Jews.

In other words, they hated anybody who was seeking to help the Jews. Now, it is interesting and tragic that there are people today who hate the Jews and they really don't know why. And they hate anybody who loves the Jews or anybody who seeks to help the Jews.

This week in Salt Lake City, we had quite a confrontation with some Palestinians. Because of the film, Future Survival, that was shown Sunday night. And they came and they were all filled with anger and hostility because we dared to say that God's word was being fulfilled in the return of the Jews to Israel.

That God said he would bring them back into the land. And this just absolutely angered them. And there was, well, there was just a lot of shouting and accusations and all.

And it was quite a scene as these Palestinians were so upset that a film would be shown that would be pro-Israel, or at least give the Israeli position from a biblical standpoint. But there are many people who have this kind of antagonism towards the Jewish people, and Tobiah and Sambalet were too. Because he sought the welfare of the Jews, they were very upset with his coming.

And so he said, Nehemiah came to Jerusalem and he just visited with them for three days, not letting anybody know what was the purpose of his trip. And then after three days at night, after everybody had settled down without letting anybody know, he took some of the men that had come from Persia with him. And he was riding on his animal as they were walking around the city walls as he was observing the condition of the walls, the gates.

And they finally got to a place where the rubble was so thick that they just couldn't go any further. And so they came on back into the city and didn't let anybody know of their little midnight journey or junket around the city. And then Nehemiah called the leaders together and he unfolded to them his plan for the rebuilding of the city.

And it involved actually all of the people working together, each family group taking a certain section of the wall and working on it. And so the priests were to start there at the sheep gate and then next to them, the families that would be working on down to the various gates. And there are 10 gates that are listed.

And then later on, the gate of Ephraim is listed and then another gate is listed. So probably 12 gates in all. And the various families that would be working on this gate and on the wall.

And in chapter 3, you have the names of all of the families and the section of the walls where they would be working. And because the names really are insignificant to us, we're not going to wade through chapter 3, but go on to chapter 4. Now it came to pass when these antagonists, Ambala and Tobiah, learned that they had started building the wall. They were very angry and they began to mock the Jews.

And they gathered together the army of the Samaritans, who of course were already antagonistic towards the Jews. And they sought to hinder the work through mockery. What are these feeble Jews trying to do? And Tobiah said, if a fox would go up against that wall they're building it, he could knock it over.

It is interesting how that Satan so often uses mockery in order to discourage the work of God. It's one of the tools that Satan often uses against us. You've probably been subjected to mockery.

Oh, don't tell me you believe those fairy tale kind of things, you know. And mockery is often used, ridicule is used as a tool to discourage the work of God. And unfortunately, many times it works.

We are sort of cowed by the ridicule of others. We don't like to be ridiculed. We don't like to be mocked.

And mockery is oftentimes a tool used to discourage a person in the work of God. Now, Nehemiah met the challenge of their mockery with prayer. Here, O our God, for we are despised.

And turn their reproach upon their own heads and give them as a prey of captivity. Now, Nehemiah answers this attack with prayer. Again, as we pointed out this morning, Nehemiah, as all of the leaders of the Old Testament, were men of prayer, praying for guidance when the king says, well, you know, why are you so sad? What would you want me to do? And, O God, you know, give me favor.

And then he lays it out to the king. And always there acknowledging God and everything. Now, here comes this ridicule.

And he just offers his prayer unto the Lord. And God will turn it upon their own heads. It's sort of like some of the Psalms of David, where he prays not for God to bless his enemies, but for God to break their teeth in their mouth.

And I sort of like David, you know, I can identify with him easier than I can sometimes with the words of Christ. Where he said, love your enemies. I find that difficult.

Do good unto those who despitefully use you. That's hard. But where David says, Lord, let the angel of the Lord pursue them and break their teeth in their mouth and smash their noses and all.

Lord, I can get into that. And so here is Nehemiah saying, Lord, turn, you know, turn it on their own heads. Turn it back to them, Lord.

And so he's saying, don't cover their iniquity. Don't blot out their sin. Judge them, Lord.

Send them to hell. And he said, so we built the wall. And all of the wall was joined together until, for the people had a mind to work.

So when Sambalat and Tobiah saw that the work was progressing so well, they now decided on a more direct assault against this building project. And they began to attack with commando type of raids, harassing the builders and those that were seeking to do the work because they began to fill in the breaches and the wall began to go up. And it was obvious that these fellows were intent on what they were doing.

And so they sought to hinder the building of it by these attacks. And again, Nehemiah answered this through prayer. Nevertheless, we made our prayer unto our God and we set the watch against them day and night because of these attacks.

Now we offered our prayer unto God and we set our watch. The prayer was not used in lieu of responsible actions, nor should prayer ever be used in lieu of responsible actions. God expects us to act responsibly.

Some people use prayer as an excuse for their laziness. It should never be. We offered our prayer unto God and we set the watch against the enemy.

God does expect us to do what is wise and what is prudent, though all the while we are trusting in him. We know that if the Lord doesn't watch the city, the watchman wake but in vain, but the watchman still wakes up. We don't say, well, Lord, watch the city and then everybody just go to sleep.

But the watchman is still there. But if the Lord isn't watching, he's waking up and he's there in vain. We realize that it is necessary that God watch the city, but we also realize it's necessary that we take the prudent actions that are required of us.

So we offered our prayer unto our God and we set our watch day and night. And so then there was further problems that developed because those of Judah said the strength of the bearers of the burdens are decayed and there's so much rubbish that we're not able to build the wall. It was just, they just began to get discouraged.

And what a tool discouragement is in the hand of the enemy as he seeks to discourage us from the work of the Lord. The enemy seems to have a whole bag of tricks. He'll try to stop you by ridicule.

If that doesn't work, he'll assault you. If that doesn't work, then he'll try to make you discouraged. And just so many things the enemy uses to keep you from doing the work of God.

And it's tragic when a person allows discouragement to stop him or to hinder him from that work and calling of God upon his life. And there are always many people with words of discouragement for anything you might seek to do for the Lord. Oh, don't you realize people have tried to do that before? Oh, we tried that 10 years ago and it was really a flop, you know, and here you're all inspired and you feel like doing something for the Lord.

And there's always some of the poor cold water on your ideas to discourage you. And many times people unfortunately allow discouragement to keep them from the word of God. And so he said in encouragement to them, they were saying, oh, you know, our strength is we're tired and these harassing attacks and all.

And he said, don't be afraid of them. Remember the Lord. And remembering the Lord is always the cure for fear.

David said, yea, though I walk through the valley of death, I will fear no evil for thou art with me. Fear always ensues when I forget the Lord. Why art thou cast down on my soul? Why art thou disquieted within me? Because I have forgotten that God is on the throne.

I have forgotten that the Lord has said I will never leave you or forsake you. I have forgotten the power of the Lord and the presence of the Lord. And thus fear gripped my heart and discouragement because I had forgotten the Lord.

Don't be afraid of them. Remember the Lord. The Lord is with you.

The Lord will give you strength. You need not to fear. And so God put the counsel of their enemies to not.

And they returned again to the building of the wall, every man to his work. So it came to pass from that time on that half the fellows would work and half would stand watching with their spears ready for the attack. And Nehemiah stood with them.

And next to Nehemiah was the fellow with the trumpet. And whenever attack would come, the guy would go and blow the trumpet in that place and everybody would drop their trowels. And they worked with a trowel in one hand and a sword in the other.

And they'd take off with their swords to drive off the enemy. Now, it is interesting that in Daniel's prophecy concerning the commandment to restore and rebuild Jerusalem to the coming of the Messiah, the Prince, he there declared and the walls shall be built again in trouble as time. And surely the building of the wall was fraught with all kinds of trouble as the enemies sought to harass them and to hinder them in their work, working with the trowel in one hand, the spear in the other half working while half watched.

And they work from sunup to sundown till the stars were out at night. And they didn't even bother. They were so tired.

They just lay down with their clothes on. They didn't even bother to remove their clothes, except that they would wash them once in a while. But they just were staying right on the task.

And the builders, every one of them had his sword girded by his side, waiting for the trumpet to sound, dropping the trowel, going to battle. Now, in chapter five, further problems arose, and this time from within. If Satan can't defeat you from his forces from without, then he seeks to wreck you from the forces within.

Many times the greatest enemies of the church aren't the atheists or those godless forces outside the church, but it is actually the church itself. Factions within the church and usually the thing behind it all is jealousy, which springs usually in the church from greed. All the church is being blessed more than we are.

And the tragedy of the of the infighting that goes on within the church. You would think that the church would wake up to the fact that we are all one body working together for one king, one Lord. Someone this morning was telling me of some pastor here in Orange County who warned his people not to go to Calvary Chapel.

Well, that's fine. We don't have room for them anyhow. But I'm not worried about you going to another church.

I thank God that people from Calvary Chapel are filling all the churches around the area because wherever they're going, they're taking the love of Jesus Christ with them. And the love of Christ is sparking revivals and a work of God all over the place. And to me, that's exciting that God is working.

And it's a tragic thing that the churches cannot realize that we should be striving together for the cause of Christ. Our problem is that we haven't properly identified the enemy. Our enemy isn't the church across town that's being greatly blessed of God.

Far be that from being an enemy. That's a joy and a blessing and something to rejoice and praise God for. Not to get jealous about or envious because the Lord is working in their behalf in such a wonderful way.

Oh, but they're Baptists, you know. Well, God loves the Baptists or the Nazarenes. He even loves us.

And we need to realize the oneness of the body. And when one member is exalted, they are all exalted. And when one area is being blessed, we're all being, it's the kingdom that's being blessed.

I'm a part of the kingdom. How thankful I am for the day that God delivered me from narrow sectarianism and allowed me to see the whole body. Where I didn't any longer have to feel jealous because another church was prospering or being blessed.

But I could rejoice because the whole kingdom of God is expanding. Rejoice with all my heart. And I believe that I can say with all honesty, and of course only God knows my heart, but I rejoice in every great work of God around the country that people are being brought to Jesus Christ.

I thank God for the ministry of Jerry Falwell and for the ministry of Pat Robertson and these others who are touching so many people for God. Rex Humbard, so many of these fellows who are just being used to reach so many lives. Praise God for it.

Now, I may not agree with their methods, nor I may not agree with them all the way in the various aspects of the doctrines. And yet, I shouldn't allow what minor differences that we may have to stand in the way of the rejoicing and the fact that God is using them and through them people are being brought into the kingdom of God. Paul acknowledged that there were people there in Rome who were preaching Christ from different kinds of motivations.

He said, I could care less. Christ is being preached. Praise the Lord.

So they think that they're, you know, adding to my own bonds and afflictions. They think that it's bothering me, but not so. I rejoice that Christ is being preached.

And that needs to be our attitude. But the next problem that came to them actually came from within. It's no longer Tobiah and Sambalot and the outside forces that are seeking to hinder the work of God, but now it's forces from within.

And so often, Satan will begin to strike from within, and not only will he strike by divisions and strifes within the body, but also by the introduction of many, what I call, sterile ideas or beliefs that he will inculcate within the body of Christ. And these sterile doctrines have the effect of destroying a person's fruitfulness. When a person is sterile, he can no longer reproduce.

And there are certain doctrines that will create spiritual sterility. They're not so evil or awful of themselves, but the effect of them is that they will keep you from really beginning to, or continuing to reproduce for Jesus Christ. You become sterile.

So many of the doctrines that make the person so totally inward, looking at myself, looking at my own conditions, I am not worthy to bring anybody to Christ until I'm mature enough to shepherd them into full maturity. Therefore, I shall not witness anymore until my shepherd tells me that I'm capable and mature enough to shepherd someone to full maturity. Well, what is the effect of that? It stops me from witnessing.

It creates a sterility. And soon those groups are just feeding off of themselves. They are no longer really a real light within a community.

The deliverance. Devil, devil, who's got the devil? And so anxious to go around and exercise. Whatever demon may have come into the room tonight, and if you burp, you're guilty of having the demon of gluttony.

And so exorcism is in order. Well, you get so inbred, and of course, you know the effect of inbreeding is idiocy. And it's also sterility.

You get to where you just don't reproduce healthy sheep any longer. Satan, his attacks from within the church. What happened here in Israel is that there were certain people, and the priests were among them, and the rulers, who took advantage of the people's plight.

And the people needed to borrow money in order to plant their crops. And these guys were charging exorbitant interest so that they weren't able to pay back the money. And they were having to give their crops for the money.

Then they started selling their children as slaves in order to get enough money to exist. And they were having large families. They just couldn't feed their families.

And the rulers were just taking advantage of the people and putting them into total bondage. And here were families selling their daughters and their sons as slaves in order that they might just get by. And it was great discouragement to the people because of the high interest and the advantage that the wealthy class were taking over the poor class, actually just making themselves richer and richer while they were oppressing the poor.

And this really got to Nehemiah, and he called these rulers together, and he said, what you are doing is not right. Let's get rid of this usury, these high interest rates that you're charging. Set the servants that you've bought free.

And let's start having an equanimity among us. And so they hearkened unto Nehemiah, and they obeyed his voice. He was so upset, he just shook his lap.

And he said, and so let God shake the person who is guilty of these exorbitant interest rates and the oppressions over his brothers. And so the people agreed to it. They all said, Amen, and they praised the Lord together.

Now, Nehemiah was a beautiful example unto the people, in that he did not take a salary from the people. He did not take of their taxes, but he supported himself completely all the while that he was there. Not exacting taxes upon the people in order that he might live a luxurious kind of life.

The governors that had been there before him all lived off of the people, but Nehemiah lived off of his own resources, showing really that his heart was in his office. It was not just a a job, it was a real calling of his heart. And he even fed his guests, and he had 150 people eating at his table every day.

So it took one ox and a half a dozen sheep and all to feed all of these people that came, but he took all of that out of his own pocket. And at the end of the chapter he says, Lord, think upon me for good, because, you know, I'm a pretty good guy. According to all that I have done for this people.

Now, Nehemiah went a step further than I would ever dare to go at that point. I've never asked the Lord to think upon me for good, for the good that I have done. I always just say, think upon me, Lord, in grace and in mercy, because you are gracious and merciful, Lord, think about me.

And I come to God on the basis not of what I have done or the good of my own life, but I always come to God on the basis of his grace and his mercy. There are times when I might be tempted to come to God on my own goodness, right after I have done some gracious, benevolent act, but I'd have to come in a hurry because I might not be able to come in 10 minutes because I can blow it so quickly. So I would just rather come on the basis of God's grace and mercy, because then I can always come.

The door is never closed. It's always open to me. I'm never turned away because God is gracious and God is merciful unto those that call upon him.

But Nehemiah had done a very magnanimous job and in a magnanimous way. And thus, he asked the Lord to think upon him for good, for the good that he had done to the people. Now, his enemies weren't yet through.

They still continued to seek to hinder the work and discourage him. And so when Samballat and Tobiah saw that the work was going on and the walls were getting up there and there was just a few breeches left in the walls, that they sent a message to him saying, come on down into one of the cities, one of the villages that we might talk with you and and that we might, you know, talk about detente and peaceful coexistence and all. And Nehemiah said, I knew that they were intending mischief on me.

And they kept sending these notes. Come on down. We know we need to have a council.

We need to meet together. We need to talk things over so that we can have an understanding. And four times they sent this kind of a message.

But Nehemiah just ignored it. He said, I'm too busy doing the work of God to take time out to talk. And he did not slow up the work, but just continued.

And then they sent the message and they said, now the rumor is that as soon as you get the walls built, you're going to proclaim yourself king and you're going to rebel against the king of Persia. And this is the message that is going to be sent to the king of Persia. So you better come down and so that we can get things straightened out.

And so here is a little bit of extortion kind of a thing or, uh, you know, blackmail. If you don't come down and talk, we're going to send this message to the king of Persia that you are intending word is the rumors out that you're intending. As soon as the walls are up, you're going to proclaim yourself king and rebel against him.

Of course, you remember Nehemiah was in very good terms with Artaxerxes and, uh, he was a trusted servant to Artaxerxes. But when a fella is gone for a while, you never know what might be upon his mind or heart. And such news going back to the king could be, uh, very bad.

And yet Nehemiah, uh, still, uh, refused to go down. He said, there is no truth to it whatsoever and just affirm the fact that it was a lie and that he was just going to go on continuing in the building. And, uh, he just said, there's, there's no truth to it.

And he dismissed it. Now he was willing to allow God to be his defense against the lies that were being circulated. And it's an important thing for us that we learn to allow God to become our defense.

Now, if you seek to defend yourself, God often will not defend you. You want to try to defend yourself. All right, go to it.

But you know, you can get yourself so involved in trying to defend yourself from all of the attacks and all of the things that are being said that your whole life is just trying to go around and straighten out all the stories that are being told. You'd be amazed at the stories that I have heard that are being told about me, my jets and my yachts. Well, my little grandson has a little yacht that he was battery powered propeller that he puts in the swimming pool, but that's the closest thing to a yacht I have.

And that's my grandson. And I had a jet sweep one time, but never a jet airplane or never an airplane, but the Jehovah witnesses have their story about me that they tell the people when they go door to door. The Mormons have their story that they tell the people about me when they go door to door, because we're one of the greatest threats to the Mormons and the Jehovah witnesses in the county, because we teach the word of God.

And the truth is always the greatest threat to the lie. Light is always the worst enemy of darkness. And because we just teach the word of God, they have a difficult time with us because we don't have any Babylonian hangups.

It makes it tough for them. And of course you people do too, because they've gotten wiped out so many times when they've come to your doors, they get skittish when they see a fish sign around or on the bumper. So a lot of times they'll just skip your house.

And if you begin to challenge them with any kind of biblical intelligence at all, they'll use it and say, you go to Calvary Chapel. Well, Chuck Smith, you know, and then they've got all kinds of interesting little stories of, well, someone talked to Chuck Smith and he said, you know, and this kind of stuff. Now, if I sought to go around defending myself from all of these things, who told you that? And try and trace it down and get to the origin.

I would be spending all my time trying to run down these stories. How the enemy would love that. Then I wouldn't have any time to study the word of God, to prepare my heart before the Lord in order that I might feed you.

He would love very much to detract us from our purpose of serving God, detract you from your serving of the Lord, getting you to try to build your defense and defend yourself against the attacks or the challenges or the lies or whatever. He tried to distract Nehemiah. This story has been told about you.

It's going to be sent to the king. You better come down. We better talk about this.

He said, nothing to it. It's a lie. I won't come down.

I'm too busy doing the work of God, busy in this work. And so then they sent to him a fellow who came sort of in the guise of a prophet. The Lord, they're out to get you, Nehemiah.

You better go into the temple and sleep at night. So you'll be safe because they're apt to slip in to the city at night and they're out to get you. And so you better get in the temple where you can get behind the closed doors and be safe in there.

And Nehemiah said that he realized that this was an attempt to strike fear in his heart and to create a reaction out of fear. Now, so often our reactions out of fear are wrong. Fear can motivate us to wrong movement.

And they were trying to strike fear in his heart, trying to create this assailant. Assassins are going to get you. You better go into the temple of God and close the doors and sleep in there at night, lest you become assassinated.

And he said, I realized that he was not from God, that this was a lie, that they had paid him and put him up to this thing in order to strike fear in my heart. And he said, should such a one as I do this thing? Should such a one as I? I'm God's servant. God is watching over me.

God is protecting me. Should I try to find refuge by hiding in the temple? My God, think upon Tobiah and Sambalot according to their works and the prophecy and the rest of the prophets that would have put me in fear. Satan tries to use fear so often because fear is an enemy of faith.

I believe that fear and faith are mutually exclusive. If you have fear, you don't have faith. If you have faith, you don't have fear.

Where fear is allowed to take over, faith departs. Where you have that strong faith and confidence in God, and of course, again, he encouraged the people not to be afraid to remember God and putting it into practice in his own life, remembering that God was watching over him. Now again, we do those things which are wise and prudent, but not motivated by fear or the fear of the enemy's attacks.

And so he would not, through fear, seek to find shelter within the temple. If God wants to protect him, God can protect him out on the walls and he doesn't have to hide in the temple. And so the wall was finished in the 25th day in the month of Ilu.

In 52 days, they completed this project of the rebuilding of the walls. It was many years before the city was completely rebuilt. The houses within the city were still pretty much rubble, but now at least they had protection from their enemies.

The walls have now been built. And now, of course, it's just the setting up of the gate that is left there in the walls. But in 52 days, they had finished the building of the wall.

Now, there were even some Jews that weren't totally loyal to Nehemiah, and he makes mention of them. And they were reporting on him to Tobiah and Sambalot. And again, the idea was to put him into fear, but Nehemiah was not the kind of a man that would be brought down by fear.

Now, in chapter 7, it came to pass when the wall was built and the doors, the porters and the singers and the Levites were appointed, that he gave his brother Hanani. Now, this is the one who had come to Babylon and told him of the sad condition of Jerusalem and of the people. He gave them charge over Jerusalem to these faithful men who feared God above many.

And I said unto them, let not the gates of Jerusalem be open until the sun is up. And before the sun goes down, make sure that the gates are closed, that the inhabitants of Jerusalem might actually dwell safely within its walls. Now, beginning with verse 5, you have actually a repetition of Ezra chapter 2. For this is a list of the registry that they found of the people who returned at the beginning, when Cyrus had allowed some 49,000 or so of them to return.

This is the same register that is given in Ezra 2, the families that came, the numbers of the family and the items that they brought with them.

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