

Be a Nehemiah

by Duane Troyer

Duane Troyer's sermon encourages believers to embody the spirit of Nehemiah by taking action in faith, unity, and perseverance amidst challenges.

Scripture: Nehemiah 1:3, Isaiah 2:2, Zechariah 8:2, Matthew 11:28, Luke 14:28, 2 Corinthians 10:3, Ephesians 6:10, James 4:7, 1 Peter 5:8, Revelation 3:2

Topics: "Leadership Development", "Faith And Perseverance"

Description

Duane Troyer preaches on the story of Nehemiah, highlighting his unwavering faith, dedication, and leadership in rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem amidst adversity and opposition. Nehemiah's ability to discern between true concern and deceit, his focus on the work of God despite false rumors and threats, and his commitment to prayer and unity among the people serve as powerful lessons for believers today. The sermon emphasizes the importance of having a vision for God's kingdom, being watchful, discerning, and dedicated to the work set before us, even in the face of challenges and distractions.

Transcript

It's a blessing to be here together with my brothers and sisters. Let's stand for a word of prayer. Heavenly Father, we thank you for this day, we thank you for this opportunity to live, to breath, to think. Thank you for healthy bodies, sound minds and all your blessings and Lord we thank you for Jesus, and the life and blood that you gave for us to redeem us. Pray for those around the world, that you would be with them today too. Pray for brother Harvey in Mexico; help him to be a faithful witness there.

Pray for sister Ulanda in Ecuador, keep her in your care. Brothers in Oregon, in Germany, the Philippines and all over the world, Lord, let your kingdom come, your will be done. Help us now as we look into your word, give us wisdom, and we pray that you would just speak to us today, that we could break up fallow ground Lord, that seeds could fall on the fertile ground and bear fruit. In Jesus' name, amen. I was blessed with what we've heard this morning already. I thought about the exact same thing that brother Atlee pointed out about godliness with contentment.

Years ago I used to hear preachers preach a lot about just being content, or satisfied. Zufrieda would've been the German word, but I always felt like there's a condition because there's multitudes of people who are very satisfied with where they're at, who they are, and yet they're on the broad way to destruction, are deceived. So I appreciate that. I sent a text out to the brothers and I don't know if everybody got it, about that I'd like to preach out of the book of Nehemiah today, because time probably won't allow to read nearly

all of it, but you might have gotten a chance to read it beforehand and maybe afterwards you'll have some inspiration.

I've just been really inspired by this man, how and what he accomplished in the face of affliction/troubles. So if you just want to open your bibles to that book. I'll share a little verse that doesn't really pertain to this message but was special to me last evening that we read in family devotions, it's out of, I think, psalms 32, or one of the psalms there in the 30's. It said, Those that trust in the Lord are surrounded by mercy. I know that some of us just received some harassment yesterday, or some things that would have wanted to trouble us, and I just found that verse a blessing.

The safest place to be is trusting in the Lord and he will surround us with mercy. So I just wanted to share that verse with you. As we look into the book of Nehemiah here, just to give a little bit of background on what's happening here, the Jews, the children of Israel had fallen away from God: first Israel, then Judah also and they were taken captivity by Babylon, and later Babylon was taken over by the Medes and Persians. And Jerusalem, the city of the Lord, that had the house built for God, this whole city lay in ruins.

And during this time of captivity, there were some remnants, some groups of people came back to Jerusalem, to try and build it a little bit. Seventy years previous to Nehemiah, Zerubbabel had come back and started some work there, and twelve years before Nehemiah came back, Ezra came back and tried to do some work there and was hindered. The book of Nehemiah is actually the close of the old testament age, one of the last happenings we read of before we get into the new testament.

And this place where they were captive, where Nehemiah was in the city of Shushan, which I believe is the same place the book of Esther would have taken place. And if you know your geography, it's just north of the Persian gulf; it would be what's now Iran, I believe, and to travel back to Jerusalem meant going through the rest of Iran, pretty much through all of Iraq, down through Jordan and maybe a few other little countries to Jerusalem. Let's start reading here; we'll read at least some of chapter one.

The word of Nehemiah, the son of Hakaliah, it came to pass in the month of Chislab, in the twentieth year as I was in Shushan, the citadel, than Hananiah, one of my brethren came with men from Judah and I asked them concerning the Jews who had escaped, who had survived the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem. And they said to me, the survivors who are left from the captivity in

the province are there in great distress and reproach. The wall of Jerusalem is also broken down and its gates are burned with fire. So it was, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept and mourned for many days. I was fasting and praying before the God of heaven. And I said, I pray Lord God of heaven, the great and awesome God, you who keep your covenant and mercy with those who love you and observe your commandments, please, let your ear be attentive and your eyes open that you may hear the prayer of your servant which I pray before you day and night.

For the children of Israel your servants and confess the sins of the children of Israel which we have sinned against you, both my father's house and I have sinned. We have acted very corruptly against you, and have not kept the commandments, the statutes nor the ordinances which you have commanded your servant Moses. Remember, I pray, the word that you commanded your servant Moses, saying, If you are unfaithful I will scatter you among the nations, but if you return to me and keep my commandments and do them, though some of you were cast out to the farthest parts of the heavens, yet I will gather them from there and bring them to the place which I have chosen as a dwelling for my name.

Now these are your servants and your people, whom you have redeemed by your great power and by your strong hand. O Lord I pray, please let your ear be attentive to the prayer of your servant, and unto the prayers of your servants who desire to fear your name, and let your servants prosper today, I pray, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man. For I was the King's cup bearer. One thing that's noteworthy here about Nehemiah is that he had a pretty high position in this kingdom of the Medes and Persians; he was a cup bearer for the king.

There was probably very little that he lacked physically; the king honored him pretty highly, but in all that he did not forget Jerusalem. And I hope as we go through this that we can draw all the parallels between what happened here and spiritual Jerusalem, And we notice this throughout all of scriptures, throughout the old and new testament. Jerusalem, it's also referred to as Zion, and the spiritual Jerusalem, it's the city of God, it's the mountain of the Lord, it's the church.

It's his dwelling place. One of the prophets refers to it as the city of truth. Nehemiah did not forget about this. And he had a burden for it. When he heard that the people there are in great distress and reproach, and that the city lays in ruin, it moved him to weep for days. It moved him to fast and pray. I'm sure he lived a godly life even as a cup bearer for a wicked king, or at least a worldly king, I don't know that we know that much about him, but he could've just kept on living his godly life as an individual.

But Nehemiah wasn't an individualist and he had a burden for Jerusalem. He was like Moses, who in spite of all the things he could've gained in Egypt, counted it all lost. He'd rather had the reproach of the children of Israel. I'm want to read a few passages, one in Isaiah, to show you what God thinks about Zion, about his city, about the place where he wants his people to be, where his dwelling place is. In Isaiah 2:2-3 It says, Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on the top of the mountain and shall be exalted above the hills and all nations shall flow to it.

Many people shall come and say come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us His ways and we shall walk in his path. For out of Zion shall go forth the law and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. This is what Jerusalem is to be, it's what the church is to be I'll read here in Zechariah 8, a few verses, and it's interesting this prophecy, him and Zechariah were the two prophets that had been there when Zerubbabel had gone back to Jerusalem seven years previous to try and encourage these guys.

Zerubbabel seemed to be one of these guys that might have been more easily hindered from continuing the work without someone there to prod him on, than Nehemiah. This is what Zechariah says in chapter 8. And the word of the Lord of hosts came saying, Thus says the Lord of hosts, I am zealous for Zion with great zeal. With great fervor am I zealous for her. Thus saith the Lord, I will return to Zion and dwell in the midst of Jerusalem and Jerusalem shall be called the city of truth, the mountain of the Lord of hosts, the holy mountain. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, old men and old women shall again sit in the streets

of Jerusalem, each one with his staff in hand because of great age. The streets of the city will be full of boys and girls playing in its streets. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, If it is marvelous in the eyes of the remnant of this people these days, will it also be marvelous in my eyes? saith the Lord of hosts. Thus says the Lord of hosts, behold, I will save my people from the land of the East and from the land of the west. I will bring them back and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem.

They shall be my people and I will be their God in truth and righteousness. Just thought that was a nice passage what God wants to see in his city, and what can be. Jesus said in the sermon on the mount. Ye

are the light of the world. And I know that some translations say, you are the light of the world. It's a little bit harder for in the English for me to discern, but the German does make it sound plural to me. Ihr seid das Licht der Welt. Ye are the light of the world, a city set on the hill cannot be hid.

That's what the church is to be, a city set on a hill, full of light, not a village in the valley, but a city on a hill. It goes on that Nehemiah, after he had this burden and prayed this prayer, that he as a cup bearer brings wine before king Artaxerxes one day and he was sad. The king saw this, and he said, what's going on? You've never been sad before, and you're not sick, so this must be sorrow of heart. And Nehemiah went on to tell him how, why should he not be sad, the city of my people lays in ruins.

And he asked permission to go help reconstruct this and found favor with the king. The king gave permission, gave some provision for this work, and he went with some people and there were some people dwelling in Jerusalem. He went there, and nobody knew for sure why Nehemiah came. He had not told anybody what his plan was, what his vision was when he got there. And he went out by night one time after he got there and he surveyed this city, surveyed the walls; him and a few guys.

And after he'd seen what he needed to see, this is what he says in verse 17, Then I said to them, you see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lies waste and its gates are burned with fire. Come, let us build the walls of Jerusalem that we may no longer be a reproach. And I told them of the hand of my God which had been good upon me and also the king's words, that he had spoken to me. So they said, let us rise up and build. And they set their hands to this work. Nehemiah had a vision that was contagious.

He had a vision of something that could be accomplished that to most people looked like a hopeless case. And the vision caught on; it was vision from God and he was a man who conveyed it in a way that other people got a hold of it. And they said, let us rise up and build. He immediately faces opposition. It was first just kind of mockery; it says here in verse 19, Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the ammonite official and Geshum the Arab heard of it, they laughed at us and despised us and said, what is this thing that you are doing?

Will you rebel against the king? So I answered and said to them, the God of heaven himself will prosper us, therefore his servants will arise and build, but you have no heritage, or right, or memorial in Jerusalem. Nehemiah seemed to have no problem with making a clear distinction and separation between those who were against the kingdom and those who were for the kingdom. And it seemed like it helped him a lot. He was not discouraged by this little bit of mockery, but he did see it clearly.

And we won't always have as good a discernment as we'll see that Nehemiah had throughout this whole event, but he did not have problem with that, he did not have a problem with making that distinction and that separation and I don't necessarily think we should either. If I'm not mistaken, Jesus said, He that is not for us, is not against us. I should have looked these verses up, but I think Jesus said something almost similar but different one time when he the apostles wanted to separate from someone was not gather WITH them.

And Jesus said, he who is not against is on our part. But the difference there is he that is not for us, is against us. It doesn't mean he has to be with us. He that is for us is not against us. We'll go on here in chapter 3, it speaks of who built where. Like Nehemiah worked out this plan and he set some people here and some people here all around this city to work on certain parts of the wall. Every family had its work to do. Everybody had a place that they could work on in this great work.

It was unified, it was the city of God, it was Jerusalem, made up of different people, made up of different families who caught the vision and worked. And there were people who laid down important jobs, you might call them important

jobs, at least more looked up to jobs than digging through the rubble of broken down walls and trying to reconstruct a stone wall. There were goldsmiths, there were merchants, there were priests, in one of these verses it says there were perfume makers. District leaders and his daughters. Gate keepers. They left what they were doing because they caught this vision and they helped build Jerusalem. I'd like to bring our attention to verse 5 there in chapter 3, where it says, next to them, (it's saying who built here, and next to him what families built here and next to them and so forth), in verse 5 it says next to them the Tekolites made repairs, but their nobles did not put their shoulders to the work of the Lord.

That's all it says. We could sit around and wonder and think. It leaves out a lot of details, but this is all it says, they did not put their shoulders to the work, but this did not stop the work. And who really missed out? It was these people, these people who did not put their shoulders to the work are the ones that missed out: the work of God continued. Let's go on to chapter 4 But it so happened when Sanballet heard that we were rebuilding the wall, that he was furious and very indignant and mocked the Jews and he spoke before his brethren and the army of the Samaritans and said, What are these feeble Jews doing?

Will they fortify themselves? Will they offer sacrifices? Will they complete it in day? Will the revive the stones from the heaps of rubbish? Stones that are burned? Now Tobiah the Ammonite was beside him and he said, Whatever they build, even if a fox goes up on it, it will break down their stones. Just anything to try to discourage them. But Nehemiah wasn't that easily discouraged. Verse 6 says, so we built the wall, and the entire wall was joined together up to half its height for the people had a mind to work.

The people had a mind to work. These people did not have mind just to mind to sit around and discuss things; they had a mind to work, and thus things happened. Verse 7 goes on to talk about the enemy and how they planned an attack. First it's a little bit of mockery, a little bit of scorn; just trying to discourage them, when that didn't work, they planned an attack and they tried to create confusion. We have to face this fact: if we are going to something good and right in the eyes of God, we will face opposition.

There is one in the world who is against God and everything that is for God. He is against the very image of God and we are created in his image. And we will face opposition. I dare say a hundred times out of hundred that we try to do something right in the eyes of God. And if he can't do it by just discouraging the work, he'll try something else, he'll try confusion. He'll try to make us afraid. He planned this attack. And they conspired together and created confusion verse 8 says.

Nehemiah responded with prayer and set up a watch day and night. Verse 10 says that then Judah said the strength of the laborers is failing and there is so much rubbish that we are not able to build the wall. This is my concept maybe, as a mason, but I think the laborers are the tenders, the people that were carrying in the stones and the stuff and there was so much rubbish in the way and their strength failed, they just had a hard time getting stuff in there to the builders, and their strength was starting to fail.

And this seems like in verse 7, it says, And our adversaries said, they will neither know nor see anything until we come in their midst and kill them and cause the work to cease. So not only was there this attack from the outside, the laborers were starting to get weak, I believe maybe the adversaries were noticing this; it was starting to get a bit more dangerous. But Nehemiah responded; he didn't react. He responded. He set up a watch. And he encouraged the people, he said, in verse 14, and I looked and I rose and said

to the nobles, the leaders and to the rest of the people, do not be afraid of them, remember the Lord, great and awesome, and fight for your brethren, your sons, your daughters, your wives, your houses.

He reminded the people who this God is that we serve. Don't be afraid. Didn't Jesus tell us the same thing when he said, Don't fear them who can kill the body, but have no more power, but fear him who has power after we die to cast body and soul into hell. Remember how great our God is. How awesome. Don't be afraid. I'm going to read verses 15 to the end, I just really like this passage, this probably my favorite passage in this whole book. And it happened when our enemies heard that it was known to us, and that God had brought their plot to nothing, that

all of us returned to the wall, everyone to his work. So it was from that time on half of my servants worked on construction while the other half held the spears, the shields, the bows and wore armor. And the leaders were behind all the house of Judah. Those who built on the wall and those who carried burdens, this is like the mason on the wall, and the tenders, both loaded themselves, so that with one hand they worked at construction and with the other hand they held a weapon.

Everyone of the builders had his sword girded at his side as he built and the one who sounded the trumpet was beside me and I said to the nobles, the rulers and the rest of the people, The work is great and extensive and we are separated far from another on the wall, where ever you hear the sound of the trumpet, rally to us there. Our God will fight for us. So we labored in the work and half of the men held the spears from daybreak until the stars appeared, and at the same time I also said unto the people, let each man and his servants stay at night in Jerusalem that they may be our guard by night and a working party by day.

So neither I, my brethren, my servants, nor the men of the guard who followed me, took off our clothes, except everyone took them off for washing. When I read that passage, I see men and people devoted, dedicated. A man who has a plan, who puts into action. I see men who are equipped. I see great communication going on. And I see great unity, though they're all doing different things. There's men with trumpets. There's men only standing there watching. There's men bring in burdens through the rubbish and there's men setting stones and hanging gates in great unity.

I've often wondered how this was, if they could work having their trowel and mud bucket or whatever in one hand and a weapon in the other hand. Seems like, well they could have laid their weapons aside and worked with both hands, and maybe instead of 52 days they could have finished the project in 25 days. Or they could have just laid the trowel down, the stones, the buckets, whatever and stood there holding weapons in both hands. And the wall would never have got built. I was told one time, you know who Ulrich Zwingli was, reformer in Zurich, Switzerland, that came out of the Catholic church, and some of these: Conrad Grebel, and Felix Manz and them were with him to start with, but then when he came to a stopping point, they went on and started the Anabaptist movement, But he was this ruler in Zurich who fought with the sword but tried to reform the church.

I've heard say that now in Zurich, there's a monument of Ulrich Zwingli who holds his one hand with a bible and the other hand with a sword. A man who's trying to serve the bible and serve the world. And if we bear in mind that our weapons are not carnal, we have come into the kingdom that Jesus established, the new covenant, we've beaten our swords into plowshares and our spears into pruning hooks and we want to be the ones that in one hand hold the sword of the spirit which is the word of God, and the other hand go about the construction for the work of God.

Or plowing our fields or whatever is. And there may some other even better interpretations of that. But in this passage I also see a man who's on guard. See this is one of the devil's best tactics if he can make us afraid, he's pretty much got us where he wants us. Nehemiah was aware, he was watchful, but he wasn't afraid. He was on guard, but he wasn't fearful. And the work continued. And God prospered his work. But all he would've had to do was just, "we won't make it, this enemy is too fierce," and withdrew, the work would have ceased and the enemy would have accomplished just what they wanted.

Being endowed with the power of God, does not equip us to go against his warnings, in other words, having the power of God does not equip us to just not heed the warnings that he gives. Like, OK, we're safe because we have the power of God. But if the bible, the word of God teaches us and warns us against this, against that, against these kind of people, against whatever. Deception, false teachings, heresies, heretics. Then we are likely to stumble if we just think, well we got the power of God so we don't need to heed these things.

The power of God enables us to discern these things, and to take action and respond the way Nehemiah responded. A lot of you have probably heard about the Lapp brothers. And I wish that I knew exactly how they worded this phrase that I heard, they are false teachers, but I'd just as soon not falsely quote, but it was something like: If you are concerned about being deceived, you're already deceived. And I hear Jesus say, Take heed, lest any man

deceive you, and it sounds to me like he's saying, be concerned about this. Take heed. Beware. Don't run for the caves, but take heed, be on guard. Let's go on to chapter 5. So, in spite of everything that was attacking the outside, there was some internal strife and it has to do with rich people and poor people. Money and possessions. Way too often the case. They had some rich people among them who were charging interest, and the poor people had need of food and the basic necessities.

They sold their vineyards, the sold their lands and they were giving their sons and daughters to be slaves, and these richer were people were still taking interest, taking advantage of them and they started to cry out. Now especially I think being that everybody devoted themselves to the work of this wall, they were no longer even being goldsmiths, and merchants and gatekeepers and perfume makers or anything; tillers of the ground or whatever they might even kind of hold what they had, or tried to make progress towards getting this debt paid off, now everybody's working in the work of God and things got worse.

When Nehemiah heard this, he was mad! I believe here it says he was angry. He was very, very disappointed at these rich people. Let me read verses 6 through 12. And I became very angry when I heard their outcry, and these words, after serious thought, I rebuked the nobles and rulers and said to them, Each of you is exacting usury from his brother, so I called a great assembly against them and I said to them, According to our ability we have redeemed our Jewish brethren who were sold to the nations, and now indeed will you even sell your brethren?

Or should they be sold to us? Then they were silenced and found nothing to say. Then I said, what you are doing is not good, should you not walk in the fear of our God? Because of the reproach of the nations our enemies? I also with my brethren of my servants, am lending them money and grain. Please, let us stop this usury. Restore now to them even this day their lands, their vineyards, their olive groves, their houses, also a hundredth of the money and grain and new wine and oil that you have charge them.

So they said, we will restore it. And will require nothing from them. We will do as you say. Then I called the priests and required an oath from them that they would do according to this promise. If we have a vision

for Jerusalem, a vision for the kingdom of God, we should in however way possible ease the burden of those who are hindered from the work of Jerusalem, our brothers who are otherwise, for whatever reason it might be burdened, in whatever way we should be able to free that.

Whatever is within our possibility, in our means to do that. In this case, the people responded and the work continued. The people responded to truth and to this that Nehemiah asked them of, and the work continued. There was not a great division among them, but they heard these words, they saw the purpose behind it and they did it. And God blessed it. Go on to chapter 6. Another passage that I really like, the first three verses here. And it's the enemy again, he's been looking on, he hasn't been able to discourage them by just mockery, his attack didn't work, his confusion that he tried to create didn't confuse them, so now he tries another tactic.

Now it happened when Sanballet and the rest of our enemies heard that I had rebuilt the wall and that there were not breaks left in it, though at that time I had not hung the doors and the gates, that Sanballet and Geshum sent to me saying, Come, let us meet together among the villages in the plain of Ono, but they thought to do me harm. And I like what Nehemiah said here. So I sent messengers to them saying, I am doing a great work so that I cannot come down. Why should the work cease while I have to go down to you?

Nehemiah knew who was for him and he knew who was against him and he had little time for this kind of nonsense that would hinder the work of God. Something happened to me last evening, afterwards that I feel like I failed in this exact thing. I mean I had wanted to spend some time preparing for this message and I got this harassing phone call that I ended up carrying way too long, I finally did hang up, and afterwards I thought, why didn't I just say I have an important work to do, I have no time for this. The Lord be merciful to me.

So here's the next thing that happened, the enemy still wasn't done. He came up with a false report. Verse 6 says, After Sanballet and Geshum and Tobiah tried this about four or five times, to get him to come out and meet them, he sent a messenger in with a message, it said, it is reported among the nations and Geshum says that you, and the Jews plan to rebel, therefore according to these rumors, you are rebuilding the wall that you may be their king, and you have also appointed prophets to proclaim concerning you at Jerusalem, saying, There is a king in Judah!

Now these matters will be reported to the king. Come, therefore, let us talk together. Nehemiah didn't make a great big ado about this. He didn't get down or troubled because there were false rumors flying around about him. All he said is, it says, Then I sent to him saying, No such thing as you say are being done. But you invent them in your own heart. For they were trying to make us afraid. Saying, their hands will be weakened in the work and it will not be done. It wasn't true and Nehemiah just kept on working.

Verse ten says, after I came to the house, and take a little heed to this here, you know it would not have been so hard probably for most of us to realize and discern that Sanballet and Geshum and Tobiah were enemies of Jerusalem. They were the ones working against the kingdom of God, against Zion, against the church, and they did enough stuff that it wasn't hard to see. But look at verse ten, Afterwards I came to the house of Shemiah, the son of Delaiah, now we notice in some other passages here in the book of Nehemiah, that Tobiah was a son-in-law to one of these Jews, so there had been some Jewish people within Jerusalem who had ties with these people, just kind of to make matters worse, but I don't know if it was one of these people, but it seems to me this Shemiah was probably a Jew and it doesn't just say that

right here, but it says, afterwards I came to the house of Shemiah, the son of Delaiah, the son of Mehetable, who was a secret informer, and he said, Let us meet together in the house of God, in the temple here that's in Jerusalem, within the temple, and let us close the doors of the temple, for they are coming to kill you, indeed at night they will come and kill you.

So this man who I believe was a Jew, comes to Nehemiah and he appears to have a concern for Nehemiah, right? They are going to kill you, let's get down in this temple, at night they're going to come in here and kill you. He sounds like a friend, right? He sounds like somebody who had a genuine concern. Nehemiah was pretty discerning. And I said, Should such a man as I flee? And who is there such as I who would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in. Then I perceived that God had not sent him at all, but that he had pronounced this prophecy against me because Tobiah and Sanballet had hired him, for this reason he was hired that I should be afraid and act that way and sin so that they might have a cause for an evil report, that they might reproach me.

It seemed like every time, or in spite of the adversity or maybe even because of it, Nehemiah's hand was strengthened. The song we sometimes sing "who would true valor see" one of the lines says, Who so besets him round with dismal stories, do but themselves confound, his strength the more is. This is just one of the things that stands out to me about Nehemiah, is his ability to just move forward, no big fuss, no big things, he knew what his vision was, he knew it was from God, he just kept going.

I'm going to read this list of things I have read before, I think, maybe it's a good year ago since I read it. This list I've had with me for quite awhile, I read it in a message I believe a good while ago, but just some good things that I like to keep in mind, I keep this posted on my pegboard, just to read it every now and then. It says, Keep about your work.. Do not flinch because the lions roar. Do not stop to stone the devil's dog. Don't fool around chasing the devil's rabbits.

Do your work. Let liars lie. Let the devil do his worst. But see to it that nothing hinders you from fulfilling the work that God has given you. He has never bidden you to defend your character. He has not set you at work to contradict the falsehoods about you that Satan and his servants start to peddle. If you do these things, you will do nothing else.

You'll get lost in defending yourself, you'll be at work for yourself and not for the Lord. It just seems that every aspect of that, it's Nehemiah. So the wall is finished in 52 days, this wall is completed. The gates are hung; it's done. So marvelous and spectacular was this work that even the enemies had to confess that this was God's doing. Couldn't deny it, and they were really troubled. There's a lot of other stuff that happened here in the last chapters. Ezra was there in town, in Jerusalem, not a town, it's a city on a hill, and he was a scribe.

He read the law to the people after these gates were hung and it was all shut. One morning he got up and he read the law. Something most of these people probably had never had heard or read before. This was generations removed from the time they had lived in Israel. It's possible if Ezra was there that some of them may have, but nevertheless, he got up on a platform, he read the law and everybody stood from morning till noon he read to them the law, and they were pretty moved.

They realized many things that they had not kept in this law, and they restored some lost practices and did away with things that had been supposed to have been done away with. I think I'll take the time to do this. In Chapter 9, they had been moved by the reading of the law, they were ready, they also witnessed the great work of God and they were ready to do what it takes, They confessed sins and I'd just like to read in

chapter 9, part of verse 5 to the end. I thought maybe like the people stood up when Ezra read scripture, why don't we just all stand to read this.

It's a prayer, it's like a prayer or a cry to God. Stand up and bless the Lord your God forever and ever. Blessed be your glorious name which is exalted above all blessings and praise. You alone are the Lord. You have made heaven, the heaven of heavens with all their hosts, the earth and everything on it, the seas and all that is in them and you preserve them all. The hosts of heaven worship you. You are the Lord God who chose Abram and brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans and gave him the name of Abraham. You found his heart faithful before you, and made a covenant with him, to give the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Gerizites, to give it to his descendants.

You have performed your words, for you are righteous. You saw the afflictions of our fathers in Egypt and heard their cries by the Red Sea. You showed signs and wonders against Pharaoh, against all his servants and against all the people of his land, for you knew that they acted proudly against them, so you made a name for yourself as it is this day. and you divided the sea before them, so that they went through the sea in the midst of dry land. And their persecutors he threw into the deep as a stone into the mighty waters.

Moreover, you led them by day with a cloudy pillar and by night with a pillar of fire to give them light on the road by which they should travel, You came down also on Mount Sinai and spoke with them from heaven, and gave them just ordinances and true laws. Good statutes and commandments. You made known to them your holy Sabbath and commanded them precepts, statutes and laws by the hand of Moses your servant. You gave them bread from heaven, for their hunger and brought them water out of the rock for their thirst.

And told them to go in and possess the land which you have sworn to give them. But they and our fathers acted proudly, hardened their necks and did not heed your commandments. They refused to obey and they were not mindful of your wonders, that you did among them. But they hardened their necks and in their rebellion they appointed a leader to return to their bondage. But you are God, ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, abundant in kindness and did not forsake them, even when they made a molten calf for themselves and said this is your god that brought you out of Egypt and worked great provocations, yet in your manifold mercy you did not forsake them in the wilderness.

The pillar of cloud did not depart from them by day to lead them by the road, not the pillar of fire by night to show them light and the way they should go. You also gave your good spirit to instruct them and did not withhold your manna from their mouth and gave them water for their thirst. Forty years you sustained them in the wilderness, they lacked nothing. Their clothes did not wear out and their feet did not swell. Moreover, you gave them kingdoms and nations and divided them into districts so that they took possession of the land of Sihon,

the land of the king of Heshbon, the land of Og, the king of Bashan. You also multiplied their children as the stars of heaven, and brought them into the land you had told their fathers to go in to possess. So the people went in and possessed the land, you subdued before them the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, and gave them into their hands, with their kings and the people of the land, that they might do with them as they wished. And they took strong cities and rich lands.

And possessed houses full of all goods, cisterns already dug, vineyards and olive groves and fruit trees in abundance, so they ate and were filled, and grew fat and delighted themselves in your great goodness. Nevertheless they were disobedient and rebelled against you, cast your law behind their back and killed

your prophets who testified against them to turn them to yourself and they worked great provocations, therefore you delivered them into the hand of their enemies, who oppressed them, and in their time of trouble, when they cried to you, you heard from heaven and according to your abundant mercies, you gave them deliverance, who saved them from the hand of their enemies.

But after they had rest, they again did evil before you, therefore you left them in the hands of their enemies so that they had dominion over them. Yet when they returned and called out to you, you heard from heaven, and many times you delivered them according to your mercies, and testified against them that you might bring them back to your law. Yet they acted proudly and did not heed your commandments, but sinned against your judgments, which if a man does, he should live by them.

And they shrugged their shoulders, stiffened their necks and would not hear. Yet for many years you have patience with them and testified against them by your spirit in your prophets, yet they would not listen, therefore you gave them into the hands of the people of the land. Nevertheless in your great mercy you did not utterly consume them, nor forsake them, for you are God, gracious and merciful. Now therefore Oh God, the great and mighty and awesome God who keeps covenants and mercies, do not let all the troubles seem too small before you that has come upon us, our kings and our princess, and our priest, and our prophets, our fathers, and on all your people from the day from the days of the kings of Assyria to this day.

However, you are just in all that has befallen us. For you have dealt faithfully, but we have done wickedly. Neither our kings, nor our princes, our priests nor our father have kept your law nor heeded your commandments, and your testimonies with which you have testified against them. For they have not served you in their kingdoms or in the many good things that you gave them, nor in the large, rich land which you set before them, nor did they turn from their works. Here we are, servants today, and the land that you gave to our fathers, to eat its fruits and its bounty, here we are servants in it.

And it yields much increase to the kings you have set over us because of our sins. And they have dominion over our bodies and our cattle at their pleasure and we are in great distress. And because of all this we make it your covenant and write it. Our leaders and our Levites, our priests seal it. Here we are today, servants. And I hope that we could have a mind to work. Rise up and build. To gain a vision that could be contagious. It's just so much easier to just sit around and analyze and scrutinize problems, and discuss solutions, than it is to just get up and do it.

In fact it's so much easier to get up and preach a message about it, than it is to just get up and do it. And one of the reasons is that we hardly face too severe an opposition until we do it. I think those of you who kind of walked together with me in a lot of this journey have seen that. We can sit around and we can talk about a lot of things that should be changed and done, and not faced too severe an opposition until a few guys got up and did it. Two years ago we had a little baby boy and I named him after this man.

And soon after he was born I prayed over him that God, if He tarries to come, and if life and time is granted, that He would raise him up to be another Nehemiah. A man with a vision, and if that even happens it can be for another generation. I think we need that today. I think we need a vision like this today. I don't think we have to wait on him.

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