

# Baruch Builds More Earnestly

by Gareth Evans

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*Gareth Evans' sermon emphasizes the importance of earnest work and community involvement in rebuilding God's kingdom, as exemplified by Nehemiah and Berach.*

**Duration:** 24:40

**Scripture:** Joshua 14:6-15, Nehemiah 2:17-18, Nehemiah 2:20 - 3:32, Matthew 6:33, Hebrews 3:12-13

**Topics:** "Baruch"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares a powerful testimony given by a woman named Miranda. She spoke for about 15 minutes, sharing how Christ had transformed her life. She ended her testimony with a quote from C.S. Lewis about the difference between tyrants and saints. The sermon then transitions to a biblical story about the Children of Israel in captivity in Babylon. The speaker emphasizes the importance of staying focused on the goal of our heavenly home and not getting entangled in worldly distractions. The sermon also highlights the opposition faced when building God's kingdom and the determination of Nehemiah to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.

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## Transcript

Let me give a bit of the background to the story. Children of Israel in the Northern Kingdom and in the Southern Kingdom of Israel and Judah had turned away from God, had built idols, had worshipped idols, and finally God brings judgment against them from the Babylonians. They'd been taken away into captivity in Babylon, and they're now there under King Nebuchadnezzar.

They're invited at times to sing the songs of Zion, and they say they cannot do so, how can we sing in a foreign land? They're there for about 70 years altogether, and during that time, Ezekiel the prophet rises up, Daniel comes to the fore, many of the prophets come, and speak concerning the situation in a foreign land. Towards the end of that time, the king allows a number of them to return to Jerusalem, and the one named Zerubbabel. In return they find the land is desolate, there are many other people beside Jewish people living now in the land, the Babylonians had brought in others that they had conquered to dwell in the land, and so those who returned under Zerubbabel find themselves very much living among rubble of their previous occupation there, their forefathers, and they're struggling to make an existence as strangers in their own land.

And then another group come back under the leadership of a man called Ezra, who was a priest, a scribe, and he discovers the old book, the laws, and he begins to teach those people back in their own land the

teachings of the law. They begin to realize that many of them are no longer living as Jews, though they're back in the land, and they believe themselves to be Jews, they find they're not living according to the covenant promises that they had made, and so under Ezra there is a call back to righteousness. But it's a little while later that Nehemiah comes, and I'm going to just paraphrase very briefly.

Nehemiah is the cupbearer to the king, and one of his brethren, Hanani, comes back from Jerusalem, and naturally Nehemiah says, how are things back home? And it's not a good report. He hears that the Jews are back there, they have now come back to a place of renewal to God and to covenant relationship, but the land, and particularly the city, the holy city of Jerusalem, is in ruins. And this grieves Nehemiah, and he finds it very difficult when he comes in next time to the king Ataxerxes.

He finds that he cannot walk in because his heart is heavy. Now in those days, if the servants came with a heavy heart into the presence of the king, that could warrant the death sentence. You did not come into the presence of the king with a long face.

But Nehemiah's heart is so heavy that when he comes into Ataxerxes' presence, his face shows how he feels. And because he has good favor with the king, he is very fortunate because the king says to him, Nehemiah, why is your heart heavy? It would have been quite common for him to have taken one of his servants and immediately sentenced him to death, but this king had a sensitivity at least. And so then Nehemiah explains to the king, Sir, my heart is so heavy.

I have sought the Lord God. I love him. I have preserved his commandments, but my heart is heavy because my house, the city of my fathers, is in ruins.

He said, If it please the king, chapter 2 of Nehemiah, verse 5, if I have found favor in your sight, is it possible, sir, that you would send me back home to build the city of my father's sepulchres so that I might build it again? The king said unto me, and the queen also said unto him, How long shall your journey be for? When will you return? And it pleased the king to send me. So this is the third group of people now coming back from Babylon back to Jerusalem. The first group came simply to come back home.

The second group came under Ezra. They reestablished the covenant with God. And now the third group will come under Nehemiah with a specific purpose to rebuild the holy cities.

So the king gave me orders that I might come again to Judah. He gave me a letter, and to Asaph, the keeper of the king's forest, that he might give me timber to make beams for the gates of the palace, which came part of the house, and for the wall of the city, and for the house that I shall enter into. And the king granted me, according to the good hand of my God, upon me, chapter 2, verse 8. So I came to the governors across the river.

This was a region that was known as beyond the river, beyond the river Jordan. And I came into the land, and I came to the governors there, and I gave them the king's letters. The king has sent captains of the army and horsemen with me.

Now when the governors heard, and the names of the governors are three, Sambalat, Tobiah, and Geshem the Arabian. These were the governors across the land in that region. When they heard that I'd come, they were very angry.

There are always people who oppose the building of God's kingdom. These men were very angry. I didn't tell any man to do what I was going to do, but it grieved them exceedingly.

So I came to Jerusalem, and I was there three days. And there arose some of the few men in the city. I didn't tell anybody what I was going to do, but by night I went out and I surveyed the land.

And I found that the walls were down. I went from the dragon well to the dung pit, and saw the walls were broken down. I went to the fountain, and I went up to the brook.

He describes his journey around the walls. Verse 17, chapter 2. I came unto them, and I said, You see the distress we are in. Jerusalem lies weight.

The gates are overburnt with fire. Come, let us build this city together. Verse 18.

And I told these men, the men that came with him, of the hand of my God, which is good upon me, as the king had granted me such favor. Verse 20. Then answered I them, and I saw.

Verse 19. When Samballot, and Tobiah, and Geshem heard, they laughed as to scorn. He said, Come on.

You don't think you're going to rebuild the walls? You're going to rebel? You're going to try and build up your own little kingdom? Verse 20, chapter 2. Then I said to them, The God of heaven, he will prosper us. Therefore we as servants will arise and build. But you have no portion, no right, no memorial in Jerusalem.

Let me go on quickly beyond chapter 3 to tell you what happened a little while later. As they're building the wall, for they start to do so, these three men keep rising up against and they start making mockery first of all. Look what do you think they're doing? Even if a fox runs on this wall, it will fall down.

They don't know what they're doing. This is the sort of complaint they made. They started making mockery.

But as they saw the walls going up, they began to be a bit more angry so that Nehemiah begins to realize that they're about to come maybe with soldiers or with forces and try to break the wall down. So he arms the men so that they're working with one hand and rebuilding the wall and holding a weapon in the other hand. Then when Samballot, and Tobiah, and Geshem begin to see that they're going to complete this work, then they get into politics again.

And they said, Nehemiah, we would like to understand more of what you're trying to do. Would you come down and meet with us in the plain? And Nehemiah said, and I knew that their plans were not good. They wanted to do me evil.

So I said to them, and I find this a little chuckle, you know the word of God has got so many humorous things. Do you want to know what the name of the plain was where they wanted to meet? It was called Oh No. So Nehemiah simply said, Oh No.

You have your plans to stop us doing what God wants us to do? Oh No, you won't. But I want to come back to chapter 3. Now if you read chapter 3, you'll wonder to yourself, what on earth is he going to teach or preach from chapter 3? All it is is a list of names of the people who worked. But it's very striking because it contains one man here who is my second favorite character in the Bible.

I talked on Caleb the other day. A man after my own heart. A man who, though the oldest man who comes into the promised land, comes to Joshua and says, remember the promises Moses made to me.

I want a mountain where the giants dwell. I want to be a man who dwells on mountains. I want to be a man who seeks after the highest place with God.

Giants dwell there, yes. But Caleb had a different spirit in him, the scriptures tell me. And that's my favorite character in the Bible.

I want to be like Caleb. But if you want to know my second favorite, he's found right in this chapter. And there's only one verse about him.

I want to draw your attention to him in a moment. As I look through the verse, I find that there's a list there of all the people who worked and the places they worked. And I find there's some very interesting people.

The high priest was there. He did not see this as a secular work that he should not put his hand to. In fact, all the priests who were working there, they were working manually at building the wall.

They didn't exclude themselves. And no person in the church of God can exclude himself and say, well, this is for somebody else to do. The high priests were working there.

All the priests were working there. However, I find in verse 5 just one little phrase that says to me that the nobles of Tekoa did not put their necks to the work of the Lord. The only people in this chapter I read who did not work were the nobles of the town of Tekoa.

What an awful memorial to have written in the word of God that we read now 4,000 years later that tells us there was this group of people who did not want to work. I hope that my memorial will never say of him negative. He's the only people recorded.

But everyone else in the city worked. In fact, I find that even the Gibeonites who were non-Jews, they helped. I find that the ruler of half of Jerusalem, the king of that region, he came to help with all his daughters, the princesses.

They all worked. Even the princesses carried bricks and moved rubble to build this wall. But there's one man, and I want to read verse 20 to you.

After him, Berach, the son of Zabai, earnestly repaired the next piece. Of all these people listed in this chapter, there's only one person of whom it is recorded that he earnestly did it. I think the NIV says zealously worked.

The only man of whom there is this adverb used that he did it zealously. I like zealous Christians. I like people who are zealous, earnest about building the kingdom of God.

I think Peter was quite passionate here on Tuesday night, earnestly pleading with us to come together to build. The exciting report he just made of people who are wanting to do that. I'm not interested in just throwing a few bricks together.

I'm interested in earnestly building the kingdom of God, earnestly. This man, Berach, I find that adverb used of him. So I ask myself, what is so particular about this man? Other than the fact that he earnestly repaired.

I look at it and I find some interesting things about him. He's the son of Zabai, we are told. Who is Zabai? Zabai, also recorded as Zacchai, another portion.

Zabai was one of those men who came back from Babylon with the first wave under Zerubbabel. These were the people when the opportunity was given to come back home to Jerusalem, though they had no memories of it probably because they were very, very young or they were not born when they were taken away. Under Zerubbabel, when the invitation was given, how many of you want to leave this foreign land and go back to where you really belong, though there's no promise there, the walls are down, there's no occupation there, there's no job, there's nobody there waiting for you.

How many of you are prepared to be pilgrims on the first wave? And Zacchai put his hand up, he said, count me in. This was a man who was prepared to leave the foreignness of the world to come back to where God has called him to be. When he comes back, he is there a little while, and shortly afterwards the priest Ezra comes.

And Zacchai is among those men who listen to Ezra, as Ezra begins to stand and read to them from the law that he has now discovered again, or rediscovered. And the law says among other things to these men that they have acted falsely against their God by marrying strange women. Now they don't mean strange in the sense that they were odd, it means strange in the fact that they were Chaldean women, they were not Jewish women.

And they had married into a foreign culture, they were worshipping foreign gods. And Zacchai was among the first to come under Zerubbabel, he is now the first to hear the law under Ezra, and immediately says, count me in. Not only will I leave my Egypt to come into the promises of God, but I will cut off all those things that have bound me from the old nature.

That speaks to me of men of commitment, men of dedication. And this man Berach, the first thing I know about him is that his father is a man who has dedicated himself to God, to God's covenant, to God's purposes. He has left Canaan, he has left the Chaldean, forgive me, a place of bondage and foreign gods, and he has come and said, I will serve the living God.

And he has committed himself to covenant. And Berach has grown up in that kind of culture. Berach has grown up with a godly father, a father who is dedicated to God, a father who is dedicated to the law of God.

A man who has dedicated, consecrated himself, and Berach is his son. That's the first thing I find about this man. The second thing I find about him is this, the rest of the chapter gives me a list of people who work together, the rulers work together, the priests work together.

There are a few, a very few, who stand out alone. Just one name, and Berach is one of those. And Berach, it doesn't say he worked with a team, it doesn't say he and his colleagues, it simply says, and Berach, son of Zabai, worked the more earnestly.

He's a man who stood alone. Thank God for men who stand alone. It is very, very easy to work when you've got a group of people around you working.

In today's culture, I always delight when I can find a man, a woman, who stands out alone. They're not going to be molded by the culture. One of the great tragedies of our young people today is that it is so easy to be molded by peer groups and pressure groups.

It's the same in church. I always find that I like men who stand outside the box. Do you know what I mean by that? They're different.

And I have a delight in meeting young men, particularly women, who are different. They choose to be different. Anne and I had the joy a few years ago, well, it turned out to be a great joy, I had a telephone call, it was a Sunday afternoon, a telephone call from my daughter here in Nanaimo, saying that a friend of hers, a woman she knew, had just come to the Lord through evangelism explosion here in Nanaimo.

And she was concerned about her 23-year-old daughter who lived in Victoria, because her daughter was going through a deep depression. And so my daughter called me and said, would I go and see Miranda, this daughter? And I tried to make excuses, you know. I got involved in other people's lives, and I visited Eric Martin Institute, people with depression, and I visited Eric Martin Institute on one occasion every day for six months.

Not far off. Just to visit a woman there, because she's different. Not from my congregation, simply because I committed myself to do so.

I didn't want to get into that again. So I tried to make excuses not to go to see this young woman in depression. But my daughter went on to me, and finally I felt a little guilty, so I telephoned Miranda, and Anne and I went to visit her that afternoon, out near Saanichton.

We invited her back to her home, and to cut the long story short, three or four days later, she gave her life to the Lord in our little study at home, and it was of God, it certainly wasn't of me. God did a wonderful thing. A few months later, she wanted to be baptized, and at a baptism service, she was the only one being baptized in the Alliance Church on Sunday evening, and she had all her family, her parents were separated, and there was a stepmother and a real mother was there, her sister was in the Mormon church, and there was many, many other people there.

And the church was packed out just to see Miranda's baptism service. And I was given the honor of conducting the baptism itself. The church asked me if I'd like to come and do it, and so myself and the youth pastor there did this.

We gave Miranda the opportunity to stand up and give testimony in front of all her family, all her friends, a lot of non-Christians in the church, a lot of them. And she stood up and she almost preached a little sermon, we didn't expect this, and she spoke for about 15 minutes about what Christ now meant to her. And then she ended with a quote, and the quote was this, from C.S. Lewis, How monotonously alike are all the tyrants of the world, and how gloriously different are the saints.

Quote from C.S. Lewis. How monotonously alike are all the tyrants of the world, and how gloriously different are the saints. And then she put a paper down, she looked at her family and her friends, she said, I choose to be gloriously different.

That is why I'm being baptized today. That young woman is a great joy to our hearts, and she's going on passionately with the Lord right now in Victoria. I love people who stand out as different.

And Beirach worked along. Thank God for men like Martin Luther who stood against the crowd. Thank God for William Wilberforce, and you've seen the film, it's out this week, is it 500 years anniversary, how many years anniversary of the abolishment of slavery? 300 years, 250 years, 200 years? Shows my history is dreadful, 200 years.

A man who stood against all the British Parliament, a man who was mocked publicly, but he stood out alone. Because he believed in something, he knew it was just and right, he believed in his God, he was

prepared to stand. Beirach's standing alone.

But he's working the more earnestly. And I asked myself why? And then it struck me, the portion of the wall he was building. For he worked from the corner, and in the previous verse it tells you what the corner is.

The corner is the place of equipping. It's where the armory is placed. And this man begins his journey at the place of equipping.

I think it's important if you and I are going to serve the Lord, if we're going to build, we need to be equipped for that task. The word of God tells me there is an equipping, there is an equipping of the spirit of God who wants to come to empower us in the task. There's equipping of the whole armour of God.

Paul tells us, you know, in that wonderful portion, take upon yourself the whole armour of God, take upon yourself the breastplate of righteousness. If we're going to do the building of God, our hearts have to be right. Our hearts have to be righteous before God because he has transformed them and changed them.

Our hearts have to be pure hearts, not alloyed with the love for things of this world. Blessed are the pure in heart, says Jesus, for they shall see God, they shall see the building complete. And God is looking for people who are equipped, with the equipping that he has for them.

Ralph spoke this morning about how easy it is to do work in our own strength, and how often that fails. But when we do work in the equipping of God, when he does the equipping, and he does the work, he will build walls at the enemy, and foxes certainly will not pass down, and the enemy cannot. For he said, when he builds the church, the gates of hell cannot stand against it.

And Barak begins his journey, his work, and the first stone he lays is right by the armory. And I like to take the picture and to make metaphor of it, that he's taken upon himself the armour of God, the breastplate of righteousness, the helmet of peace, the shoes shod with the preparation of the gospel, a sword in his hand, the word of God is his shield. This man is equipped.

This woman who is building is an equipped person. But not only does he begin the journey there, but as he progresses the journey, I find that the destination is the house of the high priest. What are you building for? What is the destination you and I are building for? Do we have a destination of trying to make Departure Bay Baptist Church the biggest church in Nanaimo? Count me out.

Are we trying to make Departure Bay Church the most influential church in the social structure of Nanaimo? Count me out. But if we want to see Departure Bay Baptist Church become a place where the high priest is honoured and glorified with a lamb upon the throne, our high priest is our goal, our destination, our riches, our reward, the one to whom we are looking. If that is our goal, if that is who our eyes are fixed upon, count me in.

Count me in. I want to be a man who is building in this life, whether it's here in Nanaimo or wherever I travel, I want to be a man who is willing to stand out alone, who is equipped with the armouring of God, who has got his eyes fixed upon the prize or a home in the skies. That is where our goal is.

And Berec is working from the place of equipping to the dwelling place of the high priest. See, when we take our eyes off the true goal, we'll get entangled in all sorts of other things. We'll get waylaid into all sorts of other programs.

But if our eyes are fixed upon the prize of our home in the skies, for God is... Do you know that song? Do you know? I'm quoting. You're not looking as though you know that song. Keep your eyes on the prize for the home in the skies for God is still on the throne.

If my eyes and your eyes are fixed upon him and his purposes, if we are equipped with the equipment that he gives us, the whole armour of God plus the infilling of the Holy Spirit, we will see Departure Bay Church being built strong as a testimony in Nanaimo that men and women will want to come here for salvation, to be built up, to be fed. It'll be a strong place. That's the kind of church I want to see.

I think that's what Peter is urging us to build together towards, a place where God is honoured and we have our eyes on him. I think Beorak worked earnestly because he knew who he was. He knew the importance of what he was doing.

He worked earnestly because he'd already experienced the infilling, the dwelling, the equipment of God. He had his eyes fixed on the home of the high priest. You see, the nearer he got to the home of the high priest, the more clearly he could hear the high priest's voice.

Do you long to hear the voice of Jesus? Do you long to see Jesus' hand upon your work here? Ralph spoke this morning and said to us that what we need to be doing, I think he was quoting from Blackaby, it's not original to Blackaby, but it's certainly a very good principle, that we need to keep our eyes open, our ears attuned to hear and see what God is doing, and when you discover what God is doing, jump on the bandwagon. Get on where God is moving. Find the wave that God is moving and then jump on.

Nowadays, I'm not one of those surfers, but if I were a surfer, a spiritual surfer, find the roller that God is moving and jump on and see what God will do. I think this man had done that. He knew what God was doing.

He had his eyes on the high priest's house. He could hear the voice of the high priest. It was enough motivation, so if there were scriptures recorded, this man, he worked more earnestly.

I want to be such a man. We come on a few chapters later to chapter six, and this is the verse I read. After all the opposition, after all the politicking of Sam Ballat, Tobiah, and Geshem, finally the wall was finished in 52 days.

When all our enemies heard it, all the nations around were afraid and they fell greatly in their own esteem, for they perceived that this work had been accomplished with the help of the Lord. My prayer for you is that when I come back in two years' time to speak in appropriate, like Ralph has done, I'll be able to rejoice with him and we'll be able to say, look at what the Lord has done. For God is still on the throne, and we, his people, will rise and build.

Amen? Amen. The Lord bless you.

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