

Rebuilding the Wall

by Jim Cymbala

Jim Cymbala's sermon highlights the importance of rebuilding our lives and communities in Christ, drawing parallels from Nehemiah's efforts to restore Jerusalem's walls.

Duration: 44:43

Scripture: Nehemiah 2:18, Matthew 6:33, Matthew 7:23, 1 Corinthians 15:58

Topics: "Rebuilding"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of following orders and being obedient to God. He uses examples from different scenarios, such as a business and a basketball team, to illustrate the necessity of people working together and following instructions. The preacher also highlights the story of certain men from Tokohut who refused to do manual labor assigned to them, showing the consequences of disobedience. He concludes by urging the audience to give themselves fully to God and to be willing to work for Him.

Transcript

Whenever you read in the Old Testament, you have to realize you're reading in a different covenant than the one that applies to us. This was the covenant called the Law, given by Moses to Israel. What you're doing when you read the Old Testament is you know, well wait a minute, this was written to the people of God in the Old Testament who fought battles and killed people.

We don't do that. Who possessed land, we don't do that. Who had all these eating prohibitions, we don't have those.

And hundreds of other commands that don't apply to us. As you read it, the first rule is, nothing applies to us unless it's found, mentioned again in the New Testament. No promise, no command applies to us unless we find it repeated in the New Testament.

But the Old Testament is full of wonderful literature, Psalms to help us pray and worship God, biographical studies, interesting challenges to people's faith. So it's full of edification for us, but we have to read it through the prism, through the prism of the New Testament and understand that we live not under Moses, but we live under Christ. Or how many are happy we're living under Jesus Christ today? So, capital punishment that they regularly practice that does not apply to us for certain offenses.

But when you're reading the Old Testament, one of the things you need to look at is, how does this apply to me today? And in what way does it tell me about the New Testament truth? How does it apply? How can I extrapolate it and say, okay, that's an Old Testament story, or this is a passage from the Old Testament. Now, what truth is in here that I could apply? Is there anything I can apply into my life in the New Testament? And are there verses backing it up that this truth is for me? I just got to do a little digging and meditating on it. So that's how you read it.

And you're especially trying to link it to Jesus, because there's life only in Jesus. There's no life in Moses. There's no life in those 10 commandments that were written in stone.

If there was, then Jesus would have never had to come. There's only life in Christ. Jesus is the image of the invisible God.

You can't take a verse here and a verse here and then create your picture of God. God wants us to know what he's like, so he sent his son. You want to know what God is like? Look at the face of Jesus Christ and study it.

As we read in the Old Testament, so we're trying to say, what does this tell me about Christ? How does it apply to the New Covenant in some way, the life of the church, Calvary, the blood, forgiveness, the Holy Spirit? What symbols, what types, T-Y-P-E-S, what types and symbols am I reading about that now I can apply to my life today? And then there are passages as you're doing that, that you just almost want to throw up your hands and say, what does this have to do with these genealogies and certain things in the Old Testament with a lot of names that are hard to pronounce? It's easy to just skip by them and not read them carefully and say, this has nothing to do with me, but you got to stop and say, what's going on? And can I extrapolate and take this and say, oh, this is how that applies to me. This is applicable to us today. So I'm going to read a bunch of names.

You pray for me as I try to pronounce them all, because these are some tough ones and it's found in the book of Nehemiah. Let me set the stage briefly. The Jewish people had been sent into captivity because they disobeyed God and wouldn't listen to his prophets.

He warned them. He said, don't do that. Obey me, follow me, and I'll bless you.

But if you disobey me and you turn and worship other gods, I'm going to discipline you and punish you. So sure enough, they went into captivity. It's called the Babylonian captivity because the nation of Babylon was the one who came in and conquered them.

They not only conquered them, they burned down the walls of Jerusalem. They ravaged and desecrated the temple and knocked it down as best they could. And they took all the Jewish people and sent them throughout the Babylonian empire.

So their policy was divide and conquer. Don't leave the people there. They'll start talking and making plans and they'll be revolutionaries.

So let's just send them all over the place. At this time, young men gifted like Daniel and then three of his friends named Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. They were all sent through the Babylonian empire.

So now who's left in the land of Israel? Who's left? Hardly anybody. Nobody's taking care of the land. The weeds are growing everywhere.

Jerusalem is a mess. The walls are broken down. And if you don't have walls, you can't protect your city.

So it's a total mess. God also said that at the end of 70 years in captivity, that's about two generations, he would bring the people back. So the book of Ezra tells us about 50,000 of all the millions of Jews heard the decree of the Persian emperor who had conquered the Babylonian empire, a man by the name of Cyrus.

So there's a different ruler now, Cyrus. And he says, everyone who wants to go back to Israel and rebuild the city and rebuild the temple, you can go back. Well, who's going to do that after 70 years? Most of the people had never even seen it.

If you were 90 years old, you were 20 when you left. If you were 80, you were 10. So who wants to go back? Now you've set up shop.

You're running a market. You're running a business. You have wife, children, grandchildren.

Who wants to go back to desolation? Who wants to go back to a mess back in the land of Israel? But 50,000 people said, no, God gave us that land. Jerusalem is the pride of the whole earth. The temple is in ruins.

The walls of the city are broken down and have big holes in them and no big gaps where enemies can come in. So 50,000 brave souls went back to try to rebuild things. But you know what? When you rebuild things, ladies and gentlemen, it's so hard.

You see, when you build from the ground up into thin air, it's easy because you just make your plans and you build. But when you take something that's broken down and you try to rebuild it, it's much, much more difficult. It's much, much more difficult to rebuild broken things, shattered things.

They go back and they start, but there's lots of problem because there's enemies. Whenever you try to do something for God, there's enemies. How many say amen? As they're trying to build the walls back up and do something with the temple foundation, there's enemies, Samaritans, different Arab groups that are hassling them, attacking them, threatening them, condemning them.

Now, Nehemiah is an official in the Persian empire, but he's Jewish. Somebody comes back from Israel, from the land, and Nehemiah sees him and says, hey, how are things going back with the group that went back? They go, man, it's bad. It's bad.

It's bad. The walls have not been rebuilt. There's no protection.

Marauders, enemies can just walk in and out. And Nehemiah goes, what? Yeah, and the temple hasn't been rebuilt. How are you going to rebuild the temple if the walls of the city aren't even protecting the people? Nehemiah, the Bible tells us, starts to cry, starts to pray.

He weeps, he fasts, he humbles himself, and he says, God, what am I going to do? God, use me to change this situation. So he goes in before the emperor who he is working for, and the emperor notices that he's sad. And he says, what's up with you, Nehemiah? Why are you sad? He says, sad? You want to know sad? I'm sad because my city, my nation, the temple where we worship God, Jerusalem, the city that God gave us as our capital, it's ravaged.

It's a mess. And God touches the emperor's heart, and he says, what do you want? He said, let me go back there. Give me some authority.

Give me some certificates where they'll be valuable to buy wood. We got to rebuild. We got to do a lot of stuff.

So Nehemiah takes off, another brave soul, and he travels all the way from that soft job he had back to what? He hasn't even been there, but he goes back. And what he does is he sees that there's a mess. He goes out late at night, and he rides on a donkey, but there's so much rubble.

He has to get off the donkey because the donkey has nowhere to step. There's just rubble. It's a mess.

And then he gathers the people together, and he says, you know why God has sent me here? We're going to rebuild the walls. Come on now. Let's go.

We can do this thing. And then they start this rebuilding process, and that brings us to the text, which if I didn't explain, that wouldn't mean that much to you. Now, notice the detail that God gives about the people who were willing to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.

This is how the city wall was rebuilt. The high priest Eliashib and his fellow priests rebuilt the sheep gate, dedicated it, and put the gates in place. They dedicated the wall as far as the tower of the hundred and the tower of Hananel.

The men of Jericho built the next section. Zachar son of Imri built the next section. The clan of Hasaneah built the fish gate.

They put the beams and the gates in place and put in the bolts and the bars for locking the gate. Merimoth, the son of Uriah and grandson of Hakaz, built the next section. Meshulam, the son of Berechiah and the grandson of whatever, built the next section.

Zadok, son of Bena, built the next section. And on and on it goes. 30 some verses in that chapter.

This one built that section. That one names, I mean, this is part of the Bible. This is inspired.

What's it all about? 38 more verses or so in that chapter telling us the names. God says, put their names in. I want the names of everyone who rebuilt the wall.

I want their names, their families, the clans. These people are brave souls because instead of sitting back, they said, no, we're going to rebuild the walls. This is God's project.

God wants these walls rebuilt. This is God's city at this Old Testament time, Jerusalem. So we're going to put ourselves to do the work because what good is the emperor saying, yo, Nehemiah, go.

You can do this thing. What good is Nehemiah coming and saying, we even have the lumber now that we can use. And the emperor has looked favorably upon my request.

What good is all of that, ladies and gentlemen, if nobody actually goes and does the work. In other words, God doesn't use angels. God doesn't speak the wall into existence.

He says, no, rebuild the wall. Oh, you're going to volunteer and do it. I want your name in the Bible because you took on the hard task of rebuilding broken down walls.

You got involved in my project. My project. There's some interesting people that are mentioned in this long chapter with all these names.

And notice what it says. It was a joint project. No one person built the whole wall.

This clan under this guy built from here to there. Then others, he was done. He did his part.

Then others built it from here to there. And it gives all the starting points and the ending points. And this one built from the sheep gate to this other gate called the King's gate or whatever.

And then this one built over here and on and on all the way around the entire city. Everyone was working together. Everyone had their part to do.

No one person built the whole wall, but they were doing it in the name of the Lord because this was God's city. This was God's project. Now in the new Testament, because we want to now apply it to us.

What are you saying, pastor Simba? We're going to knock this building down and build another one. No, in the new Testament, buildings have no importance whatsoever, really, because God doesn't dwell in buildings. God dwells in Christians.

There are no sacred buildings. There are no sacred churches or places where, oh, God dwells in that place. There's no such a thing found in the new Testament.

In fact, wherever Jesus was born in what manger, it's never mentioned again. We'd be running tours to it, but they don't even mention it. The upper room where the spirit fell, it's never mentioned again in the rest of the new Testament.

No one ever says, let's go back to Jerusalem where Peter and James and John, and they were, and the spirit fell. They don't even mention it because you don't need to be in any building. God can meet you wherever you are.

God can meet you if you're just open. There are no sacred mountains, no sacred hills. No one says, let's go back and visit the hill where Jesus was crucified on.

It's never even mentioned. He died for our sins. He died outside the city.

But, oh, God's got a far more important building project going on in the new Testament than anything in the old Testament. What were they rebuilding? They were rebuilding broken down walls. They were rebuilding Jerusalem.

Jesus now is building his church. That city and the rest of the earth are going to be wiped off and renovated by fire, Peter tells us in the new Testament. But the church, girls 16 years old getting into the tank to be baptized because they're now Christians.

Oh, now that's what he's building. But just like Jerusalem being built and rebuilt and the painstaking labor that was needed for these people whose names are in the Bible because God honors them, just like that was so, it's that way with the new Testament. God is building his church, but the question is, who's going to do the work? He doesn't speak it into existence.

He doesn't use angels. He uses regular folks like you and me to build something that's going to last forever. For the Bible says, you are a holy temple.

You are a holy building. You're God's field. Many metaphors that are used to describe the church.

So we are the temple of the Holy Spirit. God is building his church in China, in Africa, in Trinidad, in Jamaica, in Brooklyn, in the Bronx, in California. God is building his church.

And it's much, much harder work than the walls of Jerusalem. Oh, and you think those enemies are tough that they had to deal with? We wrestle not against flesh and blood. We wrestle against principalities and powers.

You put your shoulder to the wheel and you want to build Christ's church, you're going to get it on with the devil pronto, pronto. To show you this New Testament application, I want you to notice a verse that was not written to pastors. This was not written to leaders.

This was written to the entire church in Corinth. Look at this famous verse, 1 Corinthians 15, 58. Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm.

Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord because you know that your labor, notice the work of the Lord, know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain. It's not in vain.

How does Jesus build his church? You can sing it. Jesus is building his church and the gates of hell will not prevail, but you still got to get down to the song. Wait till you hear it, that the choir recorded.

The harvest is ripe. The fields are empty. Jesus says, who will go? Who will go? Who will share the gospel? Who will pray with the person? Who will counsel them through their problem? Who will travail like a mother giving birth until they work through all the attacks of the enemy? Who will give the money to send the missionaries? Who will pay for the overhead? Who will pray? Who will sing? Who will work? Who will go to the prison? Who will go to the shelter and bring the gospel there? Who will help bring the people in the shelter at Christmas to feed them so they can hear the good news about Jesus? Who will work with the children? Who's going to do all of that? Jesus is building his church, but who's going to do it? So unlike the American concept, which is you're the spectators and the action is up here.

Pastor Simba builds the church. Pastor Delina, Pastor Hammond, Pastor Burgos, they build, the choir builds the church. Thomas Wedge is going to build the church.

Dave's Highway is going to build the church. We just sit and we watch, and if we like it, we might come back next week. How about that? That's the bomb.

We might come back next week. And if someone says, how are you doing with the Lord? What are you doing for the Lord? We go, I go to church on Sunday. You go to where? You go to church on Sunday.

Isn't that the American concept? Oh, you could take that to the bank. That's the American concept. You all watch, they perform, you go home, you forget about the whole thing.

Now you come back next Sunday to see the show again. Is that not what's happening all around America today? Hey, we pay you preachers. We pay you all those people you put on the show.

And this is why the church is declining, declining, declining, declining in America, because it's become a spectator sport. How would you rebuild the walls of Jerusalem if everyone just sat back and said, no, somebody else do it. Come on, Ezra, Nehemiah, you're going to have your names in the Bible big time.

Books are going to be named after you. So I'm just going to sit and watch the work go on. But who's going to do the work? You know, rebuilding is hard, man.

You got to get stones. You got to get mortar. You got to get something to seal up those holes.

You're not picking up pebbles. You're lugging big stones to block up the wall. This is hard work.

And that's why God says, put their names in the Bible. I want their names in the Bible. What big thing did they do? Listen, they built 150 yards of a wall.

I want their name in the Bible. Put their name in the Bible. I want them honored, because in a time of discouragement and attack, instead of sitting back, they said, let's do this thing.

Let's do this thing for God. So then that question comes to all of us. Are we builders or are we spectators? Do we sit? Listen, some of us have grown up with that concept.

The Bible is strange to us because we've gotten an American, West Indian, African American, White, Southern, whatever you name culture. We've got this concept of this is the way it's supposed to work. I saw it working that way when I grew up.

You all sit. Something goes on on the stage. Look, it's a stage.

But who's going to call? Who's going to pray? Who's going to share Jesus? Who's going to get these 16-year-olds to believe in Jesus? I don't know. Somebody's going to have to do that. It is not a light thing to not do your work.

Look at this verse, verse 5 in Nehemiah. Look at it. Look at it.

How abrupt this is. The men of Tekoa built the next section, but the leading men of the town refused to do the manual labor assigned them by the supervisors. Ooh, that's a diss.

And in the Bible, that's a biblical diss, right? Listen, the men of Tekoa built the next section. What section? The one that they had to build. But the leading men of the town, God says, put it in there.

I want it mentioned. They refused to do the manual labor assigned them by the supervisors. Why would God put that in the Bible? What's the lesson for us? Well, they were the leading men.

Maybe they thought, hey, we're too big to do stuff like this. Let somebody else do it. We're the leading men of the city.

We're not going to go do manual labor. What are you kidding me? What are we going to feed people from a shelter? Some of them, you know, they smell funny. Well, I don't do that.

I wasn't raised around those kind of people. What are we going to do? I don't do that. I'm not talking to people about Jesus.

I'm not going to go call, pick someone up. They don't appreciate it even when you pick them up. And tell people about Jesus, a lot of times they just laugh at you.

I'm not being laughed at. You get it? I'm not being laughed at. So these people were too high and mighty possibly to do the work.

So God says, put it in the Bible. I not only want to honor those who did the work, I want it mentioned those that wouldn't do the work. I want their name mentioned.

Wouldn't there be something in heaven if there's a list of all the people who wouldn't do the work. Jesus spilled his guts for us, but so that we could be Christians and he saw something in us that he could use to build his kingdom. He built our lives, but we won't build his church.

That's heavy, isn't it? I know this won't get a lot of amens, but I'm enjoying this message. I really am. Choir, you got my back here in case they turn on me? Or the Bible says this, they wouldn't do the manual work assigned to them by their supervisors.

Now there's a reason why a lot of people don't build the church. They don't want anyone supervising them. Oh yes, Nehemiah.

You're right on. Nobody tells me what to do. I do as I feel led.

You understand? As I feel led and as I feel moved, that's the way I move. But nobody just tells me I don't like him bossing me, telling me what to do. Like go over there, feed that table and clean up those plates.

No, excuse me. There are a lot of people sitting listening to me, you watching the webcast. You're never going to put your shoulder to the wheel because you don't like anyone over you.

You don't want anyone telling you what to do, but how are you going to get anything done? Tell me what business works without people following orders. Would you just tell me one? So God said, put it in. Certain men from Tekoa, the leading men, they were too high and mighty to do manual labor that was assigned to them by their supervisors.

I don't like telling me people what to do. What if Carol was directing, teaching a song and she said, all right, Altos, here's your note. Here's the way you sing that line.

La, la, la, la, and they go, I don't feel that. I don't feel that note. Let us sing.

Let us express ourselves, Carol. You know, that's what you think the Alto note should be. We have a different feeling about what the Alto note.

How would the choir sound? Everybody just going, that's the story of churches. They never grow. They're never a blessing to the community because everyone's doing what's right in their own eyes.

Nobody wants to submit to authority, to leadership. Can I tell you something? Do you want to be a leader in God's house? Do you want to be someday use great follow orders because promotion comes from the Lord. When he sees that you can take authority over you, he can then give you authority over other people.

But unless you and I adjust and learn to have follow orders, how will we ever be able to give orders? How can you give orders and be a good leader, kind and generous and sensitive if you've never learned to follow orders? So the Bible says that certain people didn't do their work. I don't know what that means in eternity, but I don't want to find out what it means. Imagine if in eternity, it says, name these people.

All they did was go to church on Sunday. I sent my son to die for them and I was building the church and people needed to hear about me and they needed prayer and they need all kinds of problems. It's like the guy that came in here years ago dressed as a woman, cross dresser, a guy and he wore a dress, high heels in this building, not Ricardo who got wondrously saved years ago and just became a dear friend of mine.

And he went from male prostitute to getting married. And we honored him at Madison Square Garden and outreach we did there. Another guy came in here and there was a big stir.

Security didn't know what to do because he wanted to use the ladies room and not the men's room because he was dressed as a lady. And they said, no, you're not going in there. So they said, no, you have to use the men's room.

But when he walked in the men's room, all dressed like a woman, all the men started running out and yelling and the thing was get out of here and all of that. So we had a bathroom problem right there that we had to get a separate bathroom and all of that. Well, when I heard about him, that he had come a couple of weeks, I finally got to meet him, had him come to my office.

So I started to talk to him about Jesus. So I said, tell me about your life. Well, I was raped when I was nine by about three different family members.

So even if he receives Jesus, what do you think? You don't think someone's going to have to walk them through all that? I'm waiting for an answer here. What do you think? Somebody's going to have to take a lot of time. It would seem to me who's going to do that.

The pastors can't do that. We're onto the next emergency. It's going to have to take some choir members, some member in the church.

You know, Hebrew says, it's a shame about you people. Hebrew says, I read this week, you've been receiving teaching for so long. It should be that you're teaching others, but you still have to learn yourself.

You never come to the place where you're mature enough to help other people. You're always on life support. Always just help me.

I need more. When are you going to get to the place where you can help people? When are you going to get to the place where you're mature enough and say, look, I'm not perfect, but I'm going to help you walk with Jesus. And we're going to pray through that.

And what he's done for me, he's going to do for you. Let's put our hands together and honor the Lord for that. What if the University of Virginia basketball team worked that way? 30 seconds left.

It's tie score. They call timeout. They're going to wait for the last shot.

So they're either going to go into overtime or win the game. And they get there and the coach says, all right, here's the diagram. I want to do that.

You got it? And what if two of the guys go, I don't like that play. I'm not doing that play. Yeah, you do that play.

This is what a team is called. That's what a team does. Now, when you give yourself, let me close.

When you give yourself to what God wants you to do, it's amazing what he can do. You say, no, pastor, what I do for a living and what my skill set is, I could never be used by God to build his church, to disciple, to evangelize, to serve, to clean. By the way, there's a godly woman in our church.

I don't know. She's way past retirement age. She just comes here and volunteers.

I don't know how many hours a week. I'm afraid to ask. You know what she does in this church? She does nothing all week long, but clean the brass.

And you'll just see her little thing half bent over. She just, I see in the elevator, I just hug her. All she does, that's all she wants to do is clean the brass so we don't have to waste money getting professional services and she can volunteer.

Maybe her name's going to be more big in heaven than Jim Cimbala. You never know. But it's amazing when you give yourself what God can do.

Look at this last verse here. Uziel, son of Harhea, a goldsmith, built the next section. Hananiah, a maker of perfumes, built the next section as far as the broad wall.

What? Dude made perfumes and now he's fixing walls? Which goes to show that when you volunteer and you say, God, I want to be used to build your church, I don't care what your background is. He'll have you doing things you can't even imagine. Here was a guy who made perfumes and now he's putting big holes, covering them up so that the wall will be whole and it can protect the city.

Here's another guy who's a goldsmith, but now he's working with brick, not fine work that goldsmiths work with. This guy's doing big, heavy manual labor. There's no telling how you could be used.

Would you please listen to me? There's no telling how you could be used, you on the webcast. How in the world could God use you if you just say, Lord, I'm here. Lord, I'm here.

I'm available. Notice this. What did the guy do for a living? He was a goldsmith.

What did the guy do for a living? He made perfumes, but that's what you do for a living. They said, no, that's what we do for ourselves to keep ourselves alive, but this is God's work. We're going to fix that wall.

God doesn't want everybody to leave their jobs who are going to build a church. No, that's what you do. You work in an office.

You're a doctor. You're a lawyer. You're a housewife, whatever.

That's what you do for a But remember, unbelievers can do that. Are you a doctor? An unbeliever can be a doctor. Are you a lawyer? Unbelievers can be lawyers.

The question is not what you're doing to make a living. I'm asking what you're doing to build up the wall. What are you doing to build up the church? Some of you have grown up, and now for decades, you're going to church, and you give so little to the cause of Christ.

Isn't that a crying shame? Is it not a crying shame? Jesus shed his blood, and he saved us and separated us so that we could be used, so he could have some soldiers here on the earth. Forget the Salvation Army. Thank God for it, but we're his soldiers.

We're his arms extended. Are we not? And wouldn't it be terrible that he went to such a cost to save us so that he could use us, but we only want the saving part. Not the using part.

I only want to be saved. I'm not going to give my life now to the cause. What kind of Christianity is that? Why the Christian church grew so much in the first century? They had no such division of labor where

there was a professional clergy, and they did the work.

No, the way the Bible tells us it happens is that every single believer said, no, how can I build a church? How can I talk? How can I share? How can I pray? How can I give? How can I go? Who knows how God will use me if I just say, Lord, use me to build your church. Who knows how God could use you? But that means you can't live on the fence. Sorry to be so direct and in your face this morning.

You can't live on the fence and just go to church once in a while. Listen, why don't you settle in your mind? If Jesus is real and you're a Christian, let's get to it and work. Listen, if Jesus isn't your Lord, then stop going to church.

If you don't want to work, what are you going to church for? Go to church. Just think of what most Christians think of when people ask them, how are you doing with the Lord? Oh, I go to the tab when I can. They fought through all kinds of attacks, enemies, and they built the wall.

God mentions all these odd names because he said, no, giving honor to whom honor is due. What did Jesus say in the last days? He'll say to some people, well done, my good and faithful. What? What do servants do? Work.

Others, he'll say, no, depart from me. I never knew you. With all your church going, I never knew you.

I never got possession enough of your life that you would give it back to me. And that's a kicker. He gave his son for us and we won't give ourselves to do a little work for him.

So this is a challenging verse to me. And the work is hard. You know, when we came in this building, last thought, we came in this building, it was a disaster when we bought this building before 9-11.

In fact, work was going on on the facade when that ominous cloud of ash came across the East River and coated our building. We bought it before that. And when you came in here, none of you would have stayed for a second.

There were two theaters on the upstairs with a wall blocking sound, two theaters up there and two theaters down here. Cineplex was running a quad and they had walked out and this place was a disaster. They wouldn't fix a leak, the owners, because they had heard a rumor that some big developer was going to come and buy the whole block and develop the whole square block.

So they didn't care about this theater. They had already torn down these side boxes. No boxes were there, but the original theater had them.

And we walked in here and then when God made it possible for us to buy it, we had the job of not building a church. We had the worst job of fixing and rebuilding a building. Oh, to build a building.

I talk to pastors all around America as I speak and travel to pastors' conferences. Yeah, we bought 27 acres, Jim, and we threw up a building and then something for the family. Well, we've never done that.

If you're in New York, you're not buying 27 acres. You're looking for 27 feet. Am I right? And then what, so what do you do? You're dealing with factories, you're dealing with theaters, you're dealing with existing structures, and now you try to make a church fit into the existing structure.

Oh, so they didn't fix a leak. And up there, you in the balcony on my left, above you, there was a hole in the ceiling, six foot by four foot. The plaster had just come down.

The plaster just had come down. The water, water gave way, boom. Same thing in the Fulton Street lobby.

Huge chunk of the ceiling missing. So they had to get a mold and copy the design of the ceiling elsewhere to put that, oh, it was painstaking work and so expensive. Why? It's harder to rebuild than to build.

And that's what a man of God spoke to me, I think, by the Spirit when he visited here within the first year of us opening. He said, you know, Jim, what you had to go through to rebuild this building is what God's going to do in this building. He's going to rebuild people.

People are going to come in here broken with big chunks of their ceiling out, messed up in their minds, brought up in horrible environments, struggling to even make it in life, to get a job, to read, to get a position anywhere, to have gainful employment, not knowing the Bible, habits, crack, whatever, just eating them up, oxycodone, just messed up. And you're going to not only proclaim Jesus to them, but now you've got to work them through all the luggage, all the baggage that they have. And it's true.

That's what's happened. The man was a prophet. That's what's happened.

God sends us broken people. But I'm happy for that because Jesus fixed my life and I was broken. How many were broken when Jesus found you and he fixed you up? And honest, last question, how many had someone, mom, dad, friend, pastor, someone along the way, or a couple of people that really helped you bring you to this point? Just lift up your hand.

Come on, lift it up high. I want to see it. Okay.

So now I'm asking you, if you testify to that, choir, let me see your hands. How many had somebody? Look the whole thing. So now you're not going to be that for someone else.

You're going to sit back now and say, let someone else build the wall. Let someone else build the church. We're coming to December now.

What a great month to share Jesus. There's more anti-religion, more anti-Christian feeling in our culture than ever before. And it's in New York too.

From the media to government officials, to the board of ed, everywhere. It's no more allowed to be called the Christmas holidays. The kids are off for the Christmas holidays.

It's the winter holidays. You got to get Christ out of there. Got to get it.

But I don't care what they do. How many are with me? I don't care what they say, what they do. Because listen, you and I can start to talk.

Come on, girls, all of you. We can start to talk, invite, start praying for people, start targeting people. Oh God, I want a few souls this Christmas.

You want to give Jesus a beautiful gift? Give him some people. Share Christ. Bring them to church.

Love them. Go the extra mile. Take them to lunch.

Just do the work of the Lord. Show the love of Jesus to someone. Don't sit back and go to church on Sunday.

We can't do that. He paid too high a price. He is building his church.

He is moving in all the earth. And signs and wonders do happen. Listen, there's no telling how God will use you if your shoulder isn't to the wheel.

Here's what I've learned about how God has used me in some little way and how the Holy Spirit works in my life. When I do the work of the Lord and I step out and I have faith or I open my mouth, that's when God meets me. That's when the miracle happens.

As long as I'm sitting, worrying, biting my nails, saying I can't do that, you'll never have the Holy Spirit help you. The Holy Spirit meets you at the point of contact. Are you with me? Say amen.

When you open your mouth, that's when the words will come. It's when you give and share. That's when the miracles happen.

Most people are sitting back just hoping, you know, it's going to come down from heaven by some miraculous supply. It's as we do the work of the Lord. Oh, listen to me there.

Say yes to God today. Up in the balcony, please, just say yes. I know you believe in Jesus probably because you're here in church, but go past that.

Say, no, Lord, I want to get down to the nitty-gritty. I want to be used by you. Let's pray.

No one move. Very quickly before we sing a song to conclude the meeting, if you're here today and God has been speaking to you while I was speaking, I thought there were a couple sentences I said where I felt the Holy Spirit send out an arrow. That's what I felt.

Sent out an arrow into some hearts behind me and in front of me saying, you know what? I can give myself more to building the wall than I am now. I'm not alert. I'm caught up with the things of this world, my marriage, my house, my apartment, my bills.

Is that what Jesus saved me for? Is that what Jesus gave his life on the cross for so we can pay our bills and have a nicer sofa or a vacation? No, God said put their names in the Old Testament. They built the wall. They rebuilt the wall.

If you're here today and you say, pastor, I want to just say yes to God. I want to be more available to him. I want to be more active for him.

I want to be a builder. I don't want to be a spectator. There are spectators and then there are builders.

I want to talk. I want to use what little I have. I want to do something for Jesus.

Just stand wherever you are. I'm not going to call anyone to the altar, but just stand where you are and say, pastor, say a blessing upon me as you pray, because I've determined to step out. Yes, I sit all over the building.

I am no more. I'm sick and tired of being sick and tired. Even though you sing in the choir, you know there's more God wants you to do that you can do.

You can be bolder. You can be more proactive. Anybody else want to stand? I'm going to pray.

Dear God, I ask you today to see those that are standing. See all of us. See me and help me help my brothers and my sisters.

That we won't be like the people of Tekoa who would not give themselves to the manual labor, would not obey the supervisors over them, but help us to be like all those other people, Lord, who built their part of the wall. I can't do everything, but I can do what you call me to do, Lord. Help us to do it as a church.

We're not the only church in the world, but help us to be the church you want us to be in the world. And I don't care, God, what our profession is. That's what we do for a living.

Now, what's the calling on us to build a wall, to build your church, to minister to people, to love people, disciple people, pray with people, share with people, encourage people. So see these brave people who are standing, write their names down in heaven. Lord, write their names down in heaven.

They're volunteering. Take knowledge, take notice of them, Lord, and bless them. Lord, let your blessing be upon your people today.

Give us a beautiful rest of the day. Be with us. Watch over us, keep us.

We ask all these blessings in Jesus' name. And everyone said, turn around and hug five or six people. Tell them, I love you with the love of the Lord.

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