

(Rebuilding the House of the Lord) 5. the Good Hand of Our God

by Roy Hession

The sermon emphasizes the importance of revival and rebuilding what has been lost in our lives, and highlights the significance of Nehemiah's story as a picture of the reviving of the saints and the Church of God.

Duration: 54:54

Topics: "Rebuilding"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the story of Nehemiah and the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem. He emphasizes the importance of recognizing the brokenness and decay in our lives and taking action to rebuild and restore. The preacher highlights the encouragement and motivation that comes from realizing the good hand of God upon us and the favor He has for His people. He also mentions the need to mourn over unfulfilled expectations and embrace the given blessings without disappointment. Overall, the sermon encourages listeners to reflect on their spiritual condition, seek God's provision, and actively participate in the restoration of their lives.

Transcript

We are going to read the first chapter of the Book of Nehemiah and a little bit of the second. These portions of scripture are narrative and, of course, are not as widely known, I think, as other parts of the scripture, and therefore we have to spend valuable time in reading rather long portions, but I trust you felt the grip and thrill of the story as we've done so. The words of Nehemiah, the son of Hekeliah, and it came to pass in the month of Chislew, in the twentieth year, I was in Shushan, the palace.

We're back again in Babylon. That, and it came to pass that Hanani, one of my brethren, came, he and certain men of Judah, and I asked them concerning the Jews that had escaped, which were left of the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem. And they said unto me, The remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province are in great affliction and reproach.

The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire. And it came to pass when I heard these words, oh, here's another one of these great men who knew what it was to weep before God on behalf of his ruined city. And it came to pass when I heard these words that I sat down and wept and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven, and said, I beseech thee, O Lord, God of heaven, the great and terrible God that keepeth covenant and mercy for them that

love him and observe his commandments, let thine ear now be attentive and thine eyes open, that thou mayest hear the prayer of thy servants, which I pray before thee now, day and night, for the children of Israel, thy servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel, which not they, but which we have sinned against thee, both I and my father's house of sin.

What a beautiful identification of himself with a sinning nation, though perhaps he'd been very different from them, but in God's sight he said, I and they. We have dealt very corruptly against thee, and have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the judgments which thou commandest thy servant Moses. Remember I beseech thee the word that thou commandest thy servant Moses, saying, if ye transgress, I will scatter you abroad among the nations.

But, O a promise of grace was even given under the law, but if ye turn unto me and keep my commandments and do them, though there were of you cast out unto the uttermost part of heaven, yet from thence will I gather you and bring them unto the place that I've chosen to set my name there. Now these are thy servants and thy people, whom thou hast redeemed by thy great power and by thy strong hand. O Lord, I beseech thee, let now thine heir be attentive to the prayer of thy servant and to the prayer of thy servants, who desire to fear thy name, and prosper, I pray thee, thy servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man.

Hello, something's come into his heart. I thought he was just having prayer. He's beginning to move.

And grant him mercy in the sight of this man, for I was the king's cup bearer, and it came to pass in the month Nisan, in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes the king, that wine was before him, and I took up the wine and gave it unto the king. Now I had not been before time sad in his presence, wherefore the king said unto me, Why is thy countenance sad, seeing thou art not sick? This is a true and a godly sadness. How little of it we know.

But it's always the decree of God beginning to operate when this burden comes upon a saint. Wherefore the king said, Why is thy countenance sad, seeing thou art not sick? This is nothing else but sorrow of heart. Then I was very sore afraid, and said unto the king, Let the king live forever.

Why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my father's sepulchre, sepulchres, lies waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire? Then the king said unto me, For what dost thou make request? So I prayed to the God of heaven, and I said unto the king, If it please the king, and if thy servant hath found favour in thy sight, that thou wouldst send me unto Judah, unto the city of my father's sepulchres, that I may build it. Goodness! What a conception! He's just nobody, just a king's cup-bearer. This is how God works, with one man.

And the king said unto me, The queen also sitting by him, For how long shall thy journey be? And when wilt thou return? So it pleased the king to send me, and I set him a time. Moreover, I said unto the king, I say, He's getting bold. He's been encouraged by the Lord.

If it please the king, let letters be given me to the governors beyond the river, that they may convey me over till I come unto Judah. And a letter too unto Asaph, the keeper of the king's forest, that he may give me timber to make beams for the gates of the palace, which appertain to 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.

Then I came to the governors beyond the river, and gave them the king's letters. Now the king had sent captains of the army and horsemen with me. When Sanballat, the Holonite, and Tabar, the servant, the Ammonite, heard of it, it grieved them exceedingly that there was come a man to seek the welfare of the children of Israel.

So I came to Jerusalem, and was there three days. And I arose in the night, I and some few men with me. Neither told I any man what my God had put into my heart to do at Jerusalem.

Neither was any beast with me, save the beast that I rode upon. And I went out by night, by the gate to the valley, even before the dragon well, and to the dung port, and viewed the walls of Jerusalem which were broken down. And the gates thereof were consumed with fire.

Then I went on to the gate of the fountain, and to the king's pool. But there was no place for the beast that was under me to pass. It was all rubble.

Then went I up in the night by the brook, and viewed the wall, and turned back, and entered by the gate of the valley, and so returned. And the rulers knew not whither I went, or what I did. Neither had I as yet told it to the Jews, nor to the priests, nor to the nobles, nor to the rulers, nor to the rest that did the work.

Then said I unto them, Ye see the distress. Revised verse of 1881 says, You see the evil case that we are in. How Jerusalem lieth waste, and the gates thereof are burned with fire.

Come and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach. Then I told them, oh boys, listen to this he said, I told them of the good hand of my God, which was good upon me. Don't you realize the time, the set time to favour Zion has come? Look at these indications.

What an encouragement. They'd got used to those broken down walls. Then I told them of the good, of the hand of my God, which was good upon me, as also the king's words that he'd spoken unto me.

And they said, let us rise up and build. So they strengthened their hands for this good work. Good reading, isn't it? What a story.

And I think, you just, we've got on this line of seeing the rebuilding of the city of Jerusalem, a picture of the reviving of the saints, of the Church of God. Every succeeding chapter has a further picture to show us of this great work of grace that God is doing today. The work of reviving.

I say again, it isn't the building of the city, it's the rebuilding. And what God is after is not the vival of the Church, but the revival. For Jerusalem, yet, lies waste.

But its very emptiness and ruin, rightly understood if it's confessed, is its qualification for the grace of God. For grace specializes in ruins. Grace wouldn't be grace if there was some merit in its object.

Grace is only grace when the one loved is in ruins. It's so wonderful, this. You can't be defeated, really.

Here am I, talking about the set time to favour Zion has come, and I can feel absolutely stuck. I can try and give a message and get nowhere. That's no different.

That makes no difference. Why, that very fact, if acknowledged, is my qualification for what grace has got. This is wonderful.

This is the way. Now, this great work of reviving the city took place in various phases. First of all, as we've seen, there was, through the edict of Cyrus, King of Persia, the return of some 50,000 exiles, an official return, headed by Zerubbabel, the civil governor, and Joshua, the high priest.

These men, they were very weak, very feeble, and they were aghast at what they saw and what had to be done. And they needed all the encouragement that the prophets Haggai and Zechariah could give them. Indeed, that initial rebuilding of the temple owed more to Haggai and Zechariah than to Zerubbabel and Joshua, for their hands grew weak, and they felt so unworthy.

Joshua felt himself anything but a high priest, and he had to have given to him, through his encouragement, that great chapter in Zechariah, you know, of the vision of the high priest standing before the Lord in filthy garments, and grace saying, you take them off, put the right ones on, and a crown on his head. He's more to me than he realizes. By grace, he's a bigger man than he thinks he is.

You know, very often, grace has to tell you you're a smaller man than you think you are. But grace often has to tell you you're more than you think you are, if you're joined to Christ. Terrible, as it says in the Song of Solomon, as an army with banners.

And when you stand up, speak for Christ, and give that testimony, you don't know how people tremble. You don't know how embarrassed they are. All we need, encouragement to rise to our stature in the Lord Jesus.

Yes, we need it sometimes one way, but we also need it the other way. And they got just this sort of ministry from Haggai and Zechariah. And so it was, the first thing they did, you remember, they set up the altar and instituted the burnt offerings.

Then, with great joy, they laid the foundations. And then, you remember, after a long delay, where there was a great story about that, they got beyond the foundations, and the house of the Lord was completed. And that, as we saw, is a picture of how we, in a powerless state, can be met by Jesus.

And by grace, the house of the Lord, the habitation of God, which we were intended to be, and which is line-raised, could be reconstructed. First, the altar of Calvary, then, as we go on deeper with the Lord, we become what we were intended to be, a habitation of God by the Spirit. That was the first stage.

The second stage was the coming of Ezra. And that, if you please, was 60 years later. And though Ezra came from Babylon with great grants from the king to beautify the house, his real work was a work of reformation.

He discovered, you remember, we saw it yesterday, that the people had not separated themselves from the people of the land, and were doing after their abominations, and all because they'd begun to intermarry with foreign, heathen women. We hadn't got time, we haven't even today, to talk about the whole question of whether it's right for a Christian to marry a worldly. This would suggest it's contrary to the mind of God.

But that's another subject. But what we did see there, do you remember, we saw that though this was, in a sense, a revival of the national life, that revival needed to be revived. And they were in peril of losing everything again, because of sin.

The very sins that had caused the destruction of Jerusalem in the first place, they began to play with again. And so it is with us, we saw that any work of grace and revival in our hearts, or in our group, or in our church, invariably needs to be revived. Because it's so easy to go easy on sin.

It's so easy to begin to live with things that once we used to repent of. And the life of the Spirit within us ends. And we looked at Psalm 85, Wilt thou not revive us again? It's a double again there.

Of course, the again is included in the word revival. In other words, what David said, or whoever it was, Asaph who wrote the Psalm, it'll tell you at the heading, I haven't got it for me. Wilt thou not do your again work again? That's the prayer.

Wilt thou not do your again work again? In other words, revival is to be continuous. And Norman Grubb has a book called Continuous Revival. And the Lord Jesus is the one who is here constantly to be putting back, as the gift of grace, what sin robs us of.

It's not enough to look back to a past experience. And now this morning, we come to the third phase, the coming of Nehemiah. You see, the work of revival is not done in a day.

The damage is so extensive. One visit to Cleveland, you may see something else. But that's the mere beginning.

We don't know how big the damage has been in our lives. One man once said to me, he said, you know, there are so many things I'm convicted of. What do I do? I said, begin with the first thing.

And after the first thing, I'll show you the second thing. And so there was a, so much as 12 years later, Nehemiah comes from Babylon. Now, his great work was not the temple, but the walls.

The walls. Temple there was! But the walls were still broken down, and the gates still burnt with fire. It was still anything but a city.

True, he did have a ministry like Ezra. He had a ministry to challenge the incoming of civil injustice, and the oppression of one another in the matter of mortgages. He had a ministry of challenging and correcting certain infringements of the divine law that had crept in.

And like Ezra, he looked at all these things in the light of revival. And he had the same thing, but this is the very thing that caused the trouble, and you're going back to them. And he was moved by the fear of the Lord, and he got them under it to put them things right, lest that little reviving that God had begun to give them should be lost again.

But his great burden was the walls. The walls! He said, the walls! And he learnt in faraway Babylon that though there was a temple, the walls were broken down, and the gates burned with fire. And in spite of the fact that the people had been in occupation all that time, nothing had been done about the walls.

And what was a city without walls in those days? There was nothing to differentiate that city from any other part of the country. And of course, in those days, they were without anything to protect it. So this is Nehemiah's concern.

The walls. The walls. And it began with certain ones coming from Judah back to Babylon, and he was quick to ask them, how are things are going? How are things are going? Do we ask one another that? Someone we've had deep fellowship with here at Clevedon, and they had such a glowing testimony.

When you meet them, you say, how are things are going, brother? Not how is your health. Not even how is the church organization going. How are things are going with you? I think we ought to ask one another that.

How's it with Jerusalem? The Jerusalem in your heart, or the Jerusalem in your little sect? And he got a sad story. And they said unto me, the remnant are left of the captivity there in the province, are in great affliction, and reproach, the wall of Jerusalem also is broken down, and the gates are burned with fire. And this really got Nehemiah, bless his heart.

Although they got the temple, although the altar was having the burnt offerings, burnt upon it. And you might say, well that's a wonderful change. This is marvelous.

This is surely a revival of the national life. No, it not wasn't. It was only a beginning.

They were still in great affliction and reproach. And it could be true of us. Maybe, thank God, many of us have a story to tell and a testimony to give of what grace has done with regard to the house of the Lord that has lain so waste in our lives.

Maybe we've got a story to tell how we know the value of the blood of Christ and the burnt offering on our behalf. And though we've had blessed experiences of being a habitation of God by the Spirit, being filled with his Spirit, you can nonetheless still be in great affliction and reproach. Praise the Lord what he's done.

But man, the work of renewal which grace is after, in spite of all the time and all the blessings we've had, has really barely begun. And you can still have to confess you're in great need. Oh, it's more than happened, more than once happened in our team gatherings.

Some of my brethren who've been such a blessing to us, who've ministered sometimes from this platform, in the intimacy of a small gathering, they said, brethren, I'm terribly needy. I'm in great need. And they share a story, and they aren't exaggerating.

Though they know much of grace reaching their need, of Jesus reviving what was lost, they sometimes have to confess, I do. I'm in great need. I've come to this conference in Palmer State.

There's a dear brother I love so much in Canada, and God has anointed this man, Bill Liner, and his wife Gladys. And they've gone through the churches of Western Canada, and the fire of God has followed them. And when Pam and I went, we met minister after minister, who told of a new chapter in his life, when Bill Liner came, when Bill Liner came, when Bill Liner came.

But when we had a conference of leaders in California this last time with Stanley, Bill Liner was the first to say, brethren, I'm so down. I'm so discouraged when I go around in this work. I feel so lonely.

And oh, I'm losing something. This man, although the foundations aren't much else, these things are there, he yet had to confess. He was in great need.

You see, revival is grace restoring what we've lost by sin. And to know what we've really lost by sin, you don't have to compare yourself with six months ago, when you were so rejoicing and on top. You don't have to look back to the day when, the early days of your Christian life, when you were so happy and free, and compare it with the things now.

Oh, I've lost so much. Do you know where you've got to go back to, to see what you've lost? To the Garden of Eden. And you see, the thing that's caused the loss is not merely our current failures and disobediences, but the fall of Adam.

And what revival is, is not merely restoring me by grace to where I was a year ago, but restoring me to that happiness and that relationship with God that our first father knew, and which was lost through sin. Revival is a bigger work than merely this little current thing being put right. And therefore it's a lifetime of work.

There is no writer that I've read, and I'm not a great reader, which I was. I only seem to read the things that catch my spiritual interest. And C.S. Lewis did years ago.

And I don't know any writer who has thought so deeply into what the unfallen relationship with God was. If you want to think along these lines, I suggest you get his book, *The Problem of Pain*, whether it's on the bookstore or not, I don't know, and you turn to his chapter on the fall of man. And you read with attention his description of what he calls the paradisaical man.

And if that doesn't make you cry on the inside, I don't know what will. It made me. We haven't time to go into what it was.

Oh, that unfallen relationship with us, not a thing called duty, it was all delight. When the expected good which didn't come was not mourned over, but the given good was embraced without a moment of disappointment. Oh, I can't go into it.

It's a study in itself. And after all, it was not told us, but thank God for the few who've tried to think. There's another book of his that did something to me along the same line, *Voyage to Venus*, where you have the fantastic space fiction story, quite crazy, of how the fall was narrowly averted on Venus, on all man.

The understanding you get of what man was meant to be before the fall. And as I read these books, I said, is that what I was meant to be? I had a sort of nostalgia for a different sort of life I'd known anything about, even as a Christian. And then I saw why that is the experience and place to which grace is restoring me.

And I came to know something about brokenness before I ever heard what I was seeing described by that word years ago. A place where a man looked upon even the necessities of life as uncovenanted mercies, where it was his greatest joy and delight to give up his rights to God. Oh, I can't go into it.

Oh man, that's where God's bringing him. That's revival. It's God putting back what sin has lost.

But the overall picture is bringing us back there. Now in the story, that which burdened Nehemiah, and which Israel had lost, were the walls. The walls.

There's much else they lost, but just now the walls. And the walls were those things which separated them from the rest of the country and from their enemies. And what man has lost, and what grace wants to put back, a nice big word for you, is sanctification.

And we read in the Old Testament again and again, I am the Lord that does sanctify you. And the word sanctify means separate you. Separate you from evil, and from a godless world, and separate you unto myself.

Please turn the cassette over now. Do not fast wind it in either direction. And the word sanctify means separate you.

Separate you from evil, and from a godless world, and separate you unto myself. And this is what Nehemiah was so burdened about. And eventually, through his initiative, we'll see more of that in a moment, and the good hand of his God upon him, lovely phrase.

He shared his vision with the people. He told them all the mighty encouragement said he'd got from God and from the king, and they began to rebuild the wall. Every man opposite his house, and I believe those men rebuilt in penitence.

I believe as they put brick upon brick, they said this wall would never have been broken down but for my sin and that of my father's. That's the way. That's the way.

There's no experience of grace save on the path of penitent. You see, the Christian life or revival is not a good Christian getting better. It's a Christian seeing all through his life, parts of the wall that had been broken down, new parts that had been broken down, and which grace has never yet touched, and which grace needs to repair, and that man coming to Jesus to do it.

Now, I've been trying to choose my words with care this morning, and I've used this word grace. We mustn't use words unless they're defined. Someone said, complained in a previous week, there's a sort of cliché that comes out, grace.

We never hear that word in the world. You aren't using a word that's in current use, and yet it keeps on coming up. Well, of course you don't get that word in the world because there isn't any grace in the world.

Rightly understood. They don't treat one another that way. They give we another what each deserves.

It's seeing where the walls have been broken down, and where grace needs to repair them, and coming for Jesus, for him to do it. What is grace? There's a difference between love and grace, and I've said this so often it cannot be repeated more often, too much. Love, well the love of God, it's on all.

But grace is a little different. It's still love. Love becomes grace when the object of that love doesn't deserve it.

When the object of that love is miserable, and he's miserable because he's culpable, and the more culpable and wrong a person, the more is he the object and candidate for grace. The moment I've got to qualify by some improvement, by turning over a new leaf or improving some, grace is no more grace. That's what Paul says in Romans 11.

Have a look at it if you want a definition of this word that we're using this morning. Here it is, Romans 11, verse 6, If by grace then is it no more of works, otherwise grace is no more grace. And this restoring of the city of God is a work of grace.

Sometimes I've heard people say, Lord, in this meeting do a work of grace. I said, that's right, Lord, it'll have to be a work of grace because I'm having to preach. A work of grace, oh, my faith began to rise.

If they said, oh, may the man give a mighty message, I get small, Lord, a work of grace. Yes, the preacher needs it. It's got to be something God doing without respect to our worthiness, without respect to the fact that we're such failures provided we admit it.

And what he does in heart is going to be a work of grace. Does cleansing precede grace or grace precede cleansing? Grace precedes cleansing. We can overemphasize.

I must be clean to be used. And therefore you make your repentance a work. And therefore if you're a preacher, as the great hour comes and you've got to give an important message, you become ever so much more scrupulous.

You repent of this, you repent of that, you say sorry to your wife and sorry to the children. That works. You think that by all that you're going to be used.

My dear friend, on that basis, I'm finished. I've done all that. But I said, Lord, if they think I'm this, that, and the other, I'll tell you, Lord, they think the truth.

And I accept anything the Spirit shall say, but I'm going as an empty man. And the wonderful thing is when grace is really experienced, on that ground, you do naturally and spontaneously repent or pray or surrender or go after this one and that one, because you know you're on another ground altogether. And I want to tell you, grace always produces results where law doesn't.

Oh, a legal preaching sounds mighty, what you've got to do, but it doesn't get anywhere. See, why don't you talk about doing this and soul-winning in prayer? Because it wouldn't get you anywhere. You've only got to see Jesus as the one who's the embodiment of this grace and keep coming to Him, and the result will be abounding labors for Christ.

Grace, faith, or grace, work is by love. Nothing engages the heart in love for Jesus as to be much forgiven. That's the man who'll be extravagant in his devotion and service to Jesus.

And so it is. I am to see progressively new parts of the wall that have been broken down, broken down, broken down since Adam fell, a disrepair that I've inherited from him, but which you're responsible to see, and recognize that grace needs to repair it, and with which you must come to Jesus himself, who is the mediator and embodiment of the grace of God, to do it. Now, my friends, I see here a completely new conception of the Christian life.

I think this has been my conception for years now, but I've never quite been able to verbalize it quite as I feel perhaps I'm, I don't know whether I'll succeed. I might be able to this morning. Anyhow, here's a picture.

The Christian life is not a Christian getting better and better, but a Christian progressively seeing new parts of the wall that have never been touched. And seeing as he admits it, he's a candidate for the grace of God and coming to Jesus, he might do it. Now, this will help somebody who finds it difficult, this reiteration of repentance.

It's the last word in the gospel that is known and loved amongst us evangelicals. Now, if this is a Christian, if this is a right concept of the Christian life, then obviously progress in the Christian life is simply progress in recognizing new parts of the wall that need repairing. Not I can't do it, but he can.

But I've got to see them. He can't, obviously, deal with that which I don't acknowledge. He needs that cooperation at least from me.

Though sometimes grace changes things without you knowing he did. People say, what a difference. But by and large, this is the apartment.

And so it is. If this is right, if this picture is right, how can there be growth in grace without continual seeing, recognizing new parts of the wall that have broken down. New trays that you've lived with, never seen to be seen.

That part of the wall, man, has been broken down since Adam fell, and you've inherited it. But we've lived with it. I can only give you my testimony how God has to show me new parts of the wall that have been broken down, that I've never recognized and never let Jesus deal with and give me mercy about and restore and change.

Last week, I think it was, there was a, something seemed to go wrong with the serving of the tables, and a table was perhaps left without plates or something. And I got a bit stirred up because feeling sort of responsible, I suppose. In any case, it doesn't take much to get me stirred up, I'm afraid.

And so I got up from the table and I talked to the girl, as I thought, and just told her that it hadn't been done and so on. Later in that day, she was in tears. And when someone, was it my wife, went to her, she was a very sensitive girl, and she was in tears, she said, Mr. Hessian hates me.

And she said, why? Well, he shouted at me. Well, I admit that I possibly had spoken sharply to her, but I didn't want to call it shouting. But I've had it told to me more than once, that I don't recognize how strong I sound.

And ultimately, after a struggle, I said, all right, Lord, I'll admit the word shouted. And I don't think it was humility, it must have been so. And then, Lord, didn't I show me a particular sin that needed acknowledging and confessing? He said, here's a whole area.

Of course, this isn't the first time that people have found what you think you're talking in an ordinary way, is of this overstraw. Man, how can you grow in grace without repentance? If this is the Christian life, and I dare to say it is, never is the Christian life, a good Christian getting nicer and nicer, it's a Christian progressively seeing new areas of war that have long since been burnt with fire. And say, Lord, I admit it.

And he becomes a candidate for what Jesus does for such people. And he knows how to build up that wall and put it to rights, and so that his disposition is progressively revealed in us. Does that help anybody? And people do stumble.

We admit it. And we don't put it very well. Clevedon is classic for its feeblenesses and its mistakes.

And someone was having a great battle of what's said here. And he said at the end, well, anyway, it must be right, because so many people get blessed. Well, we aren't right.

My goodness, are we feeding our way. But we're trying to feed our way with others, to learn together what are hidden secrets of the Christian life. If you see from whence thou art fallen, you'll never believe that there cannot be a place for progressively seeing.

From whence we've fallen and progressively coming to a Jesus who ahead of time, in his death and endless life, which is imparted to us, has made provision for that. Well, so we could really end there, mercifully. We have some time, because I always remind myself that I've had to take time with the notices.

And I tell the other speakers, too, I say we always have to steal something of time so you can go beyond the half hour, somewhat. Now, can we switch to another side? Now, we have been seeing in this story a

pictorial illustration of great eternal New Testament truths. I don't know that you'd call them even New Testament truths.

They were truths long before the New Testament was ever written. That is a pictorial representation. And sometimes we've switched as we've tried to apply it.

Sometimes the revival of which we speak is something that's happened in your life. And other times we speak of it as something that needs to happen in our church or in our nation. And both applications, of course, are valid provided we do make it clear that we sometimes apply it this way, I'm trying to apply it this way, and sometimes the other way.

Now, for a last bit, may I apply it on this wider way? Because what God does in one heart, he wants to do in many hearts. And if revival is not merely a saint having restored that which his foolishness has restored, has lost, but if it is this wider thing of grace gathering out of people of lost sinners, to restore them to where Adam was, indeed, to a better place, for in Christ the sons of Adam boast more blessings than their father lost, if that's what God's after, revival will not only be the reviving of the saints, but life coming to the spiritually dead. You really cannot distinguish between the two.

Now, in this great work of God, he invariably uses a man. He doesn't stay with one man. Many other men are brought in to the new thing that God's doing in some place.

But it so often begins with one man. And in this question of the rebuilding of the walls, it began with one man, Nehemiah. Now, you've perhaps heard the famous saying that was blessed to Dio Mudi, the world has yet to see what God can do with one man fully surrendered to him.

And that certainly stirs faith, and there's real truth in it, but there's danger. You say, well, I'd like to be the one man. I'd like for the world to see what God can do with one man who's fully surrendered, if I'm the one man.

And so there's danger along this line, because it appeals too much to our egoism. And yet the fact remains, God begins with one man. The safeguarding thing is the one man with whom God is beginning has no idea what he's going to lead to.

He's no idea the world will even see it. And God began with two men, as it was, in Uganda, with Joe Church and Simeonius of Bambi. They were just two flops and failures who were telling Jesus they were.

So burdened, not only with their own state, but the state of the church in which they were. And therefore there was no wrong motive. Oh, if we do this, we'll be the ones that will be known by the world.

And that's the way it goes. They aren't particularly known by the world now. But the blessing that's resulted, there was the watershed, has blessed ever-widening circles.

And the same is true, that isn't the great work of God particularly, there's many things. There's been glorious work in your sector, another sector, many wonderful things. Grace is doing, but always along this line of restoring, of redeeming, of regenerating and reviving.

And invariably, it begins with one man, but the man doesn't know all that's happening. Now how did it begin? Well, we read that moving chapter of Nehemiah. I've been talking about the three great prayers of penitence, Ezra 9, Nehemiah 9, and Daniel 9. But I think I must include Nehemiah 1. Oh, these are the

prayers which God inspires to be prayed when he's beginning to favour Zion again.

And he couldn't forget those walls. And those gates burned with fire. The city of the sepulchre of his fathers.

And he became so burdened for Jerusalem that it was a reproach. And then he began to pray. The burden led him to pray, but there was faith in his prayer.

He saw grace. That God had promised that though because of their sin they'd been scattered to the uttermost parts from thence, if they repented, even from thence, would God bring his people back to their land. He said, well, I'm one who wants to repent.

I'm one who wants to turn to the evil and get right. And Lord, I happen to know there's some others too, only a remnant. Would that be enough, do you think, Lord? And oh, he laid hold of these promises.

Well, it's fine to pray. And as I indicated at the end, he says, Oh, Lord, I beseech thee, let now thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servant, and to the prayer of thy servants who desire to fear thy name, and prosper, I pray thee, thy servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man. Hello? What's happened? The burden and the prayer of faith has led him to dare to make a venture.

Whether it's right or wrong, he doesn't know. And he begins to act, to do an extraordinary thing, to ask this extraordinary favor. And as he acted, he found at each successive stage, listen to this, the good hand of his God upon him.

This is one of the characteristic phrases both Ezra and Nehemiah quoted. Ezra, oh, I've got all the references down here. Perhaps I didn't bother to mention them.

More in Ezra than in Nehemiah, and two wonderful ones in Nehemiah. In fact, we read them. This is one of the characteristic phrases in this exciting period, of God doing this new thing.

As Ezra moved, as Nehemiah moved, there was a good hand of the Lord, that God. The impossible happened. Doors opened.

Grants were given. Concessions made. And they said, Boys, we're on course.

We're on to something. And who were they? Completely unauthorized men. Especially Nehemiah.

Ezra certainly descended from the priests. But Nehemiah could claim no such thing. One man, God-bidden, sore of heed, and dared to begin to move.

And as he began to move, first this thing happened, that thing happened. And these fellows are on something terrifically exciting. They were thrilled to bits.

He said, My, they're beginning something. The good hand of the Lord I've got. What do you think has happened, fellows? What? The king's done that? And you've got all the grant for all the wood? And you realize you're in on something.

You're in on something living. And who knows where it's going to grow. Now, if I'm right in thinking that the time to favour Zion, even the set time has come today, we're going to find some, and I'm thinking of young people particularly, are going to see a need.

We're going to see the Lord's house lying waste in other young people, or whatever else it may be. And they're going to pray. They'll be so burdened.

And without waiting for the minister, or the deacons, or perhaps any training, they're going to begin to act. Grant, I pray thee, mercy in the sight of this man. This is the history.

Again and again. Are you waiting for a mission board to accept you? Fine. It's a thing God's shown you the need.

It's the Lord's house lying waste in another country. And you go through the accepted channels. But man, you haven't got to wait for that.

The bit he's showing you is something right now, maybe. And without waiting for anybody else, have a fellowship with a few others, you begin to move. You find the hand of the Lord's upon you for good.

And as you go on, he's on you for good. And like Nehemiah, you get some of the other fellows. You keep it a secret.

Do you know what's happened? I began to move. Had the door opened. Permissions being granted.

Boys, put in on something. And as they took successive stages, again and again, the hand of the Lord was upon them for good. This is the way in which new movements of the Spirit of God had been initiated.

I can think of some of my friends, my dear friend Ian Thomas, a medical student, going to be a doctor. But he got burned. He didn't wait for anybody else.

Didn't apply to a committee. And he gave up his medical career, halfway through. For some people, for a young person, to opt out of their university course, or medical course, is an unforgivable sin.

I think I'm right in saying that those older people who knew Norman Grubb have never really forgiven him for not completing his university course. And he went out with seated staff, as did others. Now, we've got to be willing for this.

And it needs to be checked and cross-checked. Indeed, I said to one young man, who, bless his heart, I love him in the Lord, I heard he said, well, all I want is a bed. Oh, come up with Jesus.

Yes. And I passed on the message to him. I hope he's got it.

I didn't have a chance to say it. One day you'll love a girl, and you'll want to marry her. Bear that in mind.

It may be God's way of saying, carry on with that job. There's a work that you can do while you're in it. But sometimes the work becomes such, it's so great, it's so thrilling, that you can't do two things.

I think for myself, that's what happened. I found I couldn't go here and there, as I was doing at the weekends, and still be in an office. Begin where you are.

Begin where you are. Like the parachutists in the war. They came down with their guns, and they went into action at the spot where they were.

Don't pine for something over the hills and far away. Right now! Is that something that's burdening you? You get into Nehemiah's place, and begin to take the initial steps. And do you know, you may well find

yourself, you're on course.

You see, in any case, you can't guide a stationary vessel. And if Nehemiah stopped in Babylon and only prayed, he wouldn't have got on course as he did. And I believe God wants to call out young people in this day when he's designing to favour Zion a new way.

Thank God he is doing it. For some of us it's taking our breath away to see the dedication of some of those Jesus people to whom he made the other Sunday's offering. Who knows? They don't know they're going to create history.

But in the history of the Church it may be. And some simple step that you take, you don't know. All you're burdened about is those walls, those gates, that situation, those desperate other young people.

As you begin to move, you find God giving you words and God using you. Maybe you've never been used very much. So I end with this call, this vision.

And, oh, friend, you may get into something and you'll find the good hand of the Lord your God upon you. And it isn't only young people. Oh, man, there's a home you could use.

You're so burdened. Are you burdened? Or maybe there's a hole you could use for something around. I don't know.

Get, oh, give me mercy before this man. And something has come into the heart of your wife and yourself. Move.

Move. Listen. The worst that can happen to you is you can make a mistake.

Is that terrible? Someone has said the man who never made mistakes never made anything. And even if some of us may find that it was a wrong step, do you know what the Lord says? It was well that it was in thine heart. Anything rather than staying stuck while world is perishing, while the house of the Lord lies waste.

And so this is this great story of the rebuilding of Jerusalem, the city of God. And you and I are given a share in it. Maybe your share is to repair the bit of the wall that's opposite your house.

Just right there. Or rather recognizing it's broken down and asking grace, Jesus, to fill what you had meant. And so we could go on.

So there is something of this. To me, I must confess, I'm amazed at this picture. I never thought when we embarked on this picture it would be so completely illustrative of the thing, frankly, that motivates us in Clevedon.

We don't run Clevedon as a sort of Christian butler. This is all our hope. And thank God in measure it's been fulfilled.

And we know churches have been revived and pastors and young people and young people's groups. And so it does mean that it does help us to know where we're going. Friend, what about you? Are you prepared to recognize progressively those parts of the wall that have been broken down for you, which you've never recognized, never been willing to bring to Jesus, that a Jesus in whom all fullness dwells might be the answer there? Praise.

God help us to go this way even today. And the thing to do is deal with the next thing he shows you. And praise the Lord.

Grace there is our every debt to pay. We learn to wash our every sin away. Power to keep us spotless day by day in this Jesus for us.

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