

From Babylon to Jerusalem - (Nehemiah) ch.5 & 6

by Zac Poonen

The sermon highlights the importance of treating others with compassion and kindness, especially those in need, and the need for discipline in the church to prevent corruption.

Duration: 59:37

Scripture: Nehemiah 2:20, Nehemiah 5:6, Nehemiah 5:14-19, Matthew 6:33, Luke 9:62

Topics: "From Babylon To Jerusalem"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the example of Nehemiah and how he lived a life of financial integrity and wholehearted devotion to God. Nehemiah's commitment to God's work was so strong that he left his position in the king's service for 12 years, sacrificing opportunities for promotion and increment. The speaker emphasizes the importance of not allowing ourselves to be distracted from the work God has called us to do. The sermon also highlights the various ways the enemy tries to hinder the work of God, including through reproach, persecution, discouragement, and internal conflicts within the community.

Transcript

Let's turn to Nehemiah chapter 5. In our last study, we finished at chapter 4. We saw how Nehemiah and his co-workers were both soldiers and servants in building the wall. There was a spirit of a soldier and the spirit of a servant. And they were wholehearted, so wholehearted in building a wall that it says in verse 23, none of us even removed our clothes.

They weren't occupied with earthly comforts and conveniences while doing the work of God. And we have seen that there are examples here for us to follow in these days as we seek to build the walls of Jerusalem, bringing separation from Babylon and security for the church. Now we come to chapter 5. In chapter 4, we were considering how the enemy sought to attack, first of all by reproach, then by persecution, and then by seeking to discourage them, bringing fear into their hearts.

And now we see another way by which the devil seeks to work, to hinder the work of God, chapter 5. And that is by working in the midst of the Jews who lived in Jerusalem. And that's something we discovered as we do the work of the Lord. We can build the walls of Jerusalem and seek to keep out the spirit of Babylon, but it's a continuous battle, because difficulties can come between the brothers and sisters inside the walls, and that is more serious.

That's what we read of in Nehemiah chapter 5. There was a great outcry of the people and of their wives against their Jewish brothers. These were brothers having a difficulty among themselves. This is not Sanballat and all the enemies out there coming and attacking God's people.

These were problems coming between the believers, between the saints. And it's very interesting to see the type of problem that came here. There were those who said, we are sons and our daughters are many, therefore let us get grain that we may eat and live.

You see, this is a problem that was there then, and it is a problem that is there now. That in Jerusalem, in those days, there were some brothers who were very wealthy, and there were some brothers who were very poor. And it's exactly the same today.

There are those who are very well off financially, and there are those who are very poor financially. And it's a wonderful thing when in a church, the rich and the poor and those in the middle can learn to get along with each other, love one another, respect one another as brothers, and build the body of Christ together. But here is where the problems can come.

The rich can be selfish and hold on to what they have, and the poor can be jealous and always have a receiving attitude, wanting to receive. And both ways, God's work is hindered. And the others said, we are mortgaging our fields, our vineyards, and our houses, that we might get grain because of the famine.

And also there were those who said, we have borrowed money for the king's tax on our fields and on our vineyards, and now our flesh is like the flesh of our brothers, our children like their children. Yet, behold, we are forcing our sons and our daughters to be slaves, and some of our daughters are forced into bondage already. We are helpless because of our fields and vineyards belong to others.

What was happening was, these Jews who came back from Babylon, they were not well off. They had given up everything and they've come here. And after some time, their money ran out, wasn't easy to find employment and to earn an income.

There were others there who had been there for a longer time, perhaps, who had become rich. And when the poor Jews were in difficulty, they would go to these rich Jews and borrow money. And they would borrow money by mortgaging some of their houses or their lands.

And finally, they'd lost all their lands and houses and vineyards and mortgage. And finally, it had come to the place where they were selling their sons and their daughters. It says some of their daughters, verse 5, had already been sold as slaves in order to meet their financial needs.

You can imagine the sad condition of those who were inside the wall, where the walls were being built. And this was a result of the hard-heartedness on the part of certain believers who were there within the walls, who did not have compassion on the need of others. You can be a Pharisee, even though you say you left the Babylonian system, a Pharisee with a hard heart, when you see another brother in need.

James says, when you see a brother in need, and you close up your heart towards him, saying, Praise the Lord, brother, God bless you, may He provide your need. And you have it within your means to help him, and you don't help him. He says, your faith is just dead.

It's a lot of rubbish, what you call faith. It's not faith at all. It's the same situation over here.

And then it produced strife, produced strife between the two. We read in Galatians 5, verse 15, the devil's aim in producing strife between believers is here. Galatians 5.15, it says, if you bite and devour one another, take heed, take care, lest you be consumed by one another.

The devil's aim to get believers to fight is that gradually, they will destroy one another spiritually. This is what happens to a husband and wife, when they fight with each other. They both destroy each other spiritually.

I mean, the devil can do some other work. He doesn't have to worry about these two, because they're fighting with each other so much, that they're doing his work for him, by fighting with each other, and destroying each other spiritually. If you bite and devour each other, just be careful that one day you are just consumed, there'll be nothing left of you spiritually.

Wisdom is to recognize that, and to see that the devil will seek to come in that way, and therefore to be alert. When Jesus said, watch and pray, that means be alert to the ways in which the enemy is seeking to come. And here we see that Nehemiah was alert, and we'll come to that in a moment.

I want to say a word here about the Old Testament law concerning lending. It says here that they had to borrow money from their rich believers, and there was a law in the Old Testament that taught that when you lend to your fellow Jews, you must not take any interest from them. He said you can take interest from the Gentiles, but you must not take any interest from your fellow brethren, the Jews.

That was a law that God gave through Moses. Of course, these people are violating even that law. Later on we see that they were not only lending money, but they were lending it at interest.

Violating that law. Now, how is the New Covenant superior to the Old Covenant? Are we permitted to lend money to our fellow believers in need today? That is, if God leads us to do so. We have to be careful that we do not lend just because we have a human compassion, but if God leads us to do so, is it right to lend? We read in Luke 6.35, it is right to lend, but the question here is, how shall we lend? This is where I want you to notice a difference between money lending in the Old Covenant and money lending in the New Covenant.

In the Old Covenant, it was like this. Lend money to your brother when he is in need, but do not take interest from him. And if at the end of seven years, once in seven years, the sabbatical year would come and he is not able to repay it, and he has nothing with which to repay it, release him.

But here, in the New Covenant, everything in the New Covenant is higher. We read in Luke 6.35, in the middle of that verse, lend expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great. You know what the difference between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant is? In the Old Covenant, you give and do not receive, do not expect any interest, do not receive any interest.

In the New Covenant, it says, lend and do not even expect the capital back. Leave alone the interest, forget about the interest altogether, but not even the capital. And when a brother does not obey Luke 6.35, he lends and he expects it back because the other brother said he would return it.

Now, after some years I've come across cases like this. He doesn't get it back, he gets into unrest. And if he would only judge himself, he could see that the fault is maybe with the other brother, but it's also with him that he did not obey Luke 6.35. He lent expecting something in return.

We are told to lend expecting nothing in return. If that is difficult for us, then it's better not to lend. And so many relationships are spoiled because people don't obey the Scriptures.

They don't obey what Jesus said. Now, that's just by the way. But I want to point you back here to Nehemiah 5 verses 1 to 5. We see here that those who were rich and those who had means were taking advantage of the poor believers.

And that can happen even today. It may not be in terms of buying their daughters as slaves. We are not so crude as that because even the law of the land will catch us for that.

But the question is, it may not be riches and money. There may be some way in which another person may be dependent on me for something. And that is the time where my Christianity is tested.

And it is so easy to take advantage of another person. A godly person will never take advantage of another brother. Particularly when that brother is dependent on him for some help.

That's the lesson we learn in the five verses of Nehemiah 5. These rich people did not have light on that. You are taking advantage of your weaker brother there. And there we can profitably examine ourselves to see whether we take advantage.

For example, we can be older in age and take advantage of a brother merely because he is younger to us and virtually treat him like a servant and not like a brother because he is indebted to me in some way. And there I take advantage. I don't realize that what have I got that I did not receive.

And if I have helped him in some way, it is what God has given me. He is not indebted to me. He is indebted to God.

That's all. And there we have to be very careful, brothers and sisters, that we never, never take advantage of anyone. Listen to the Apostle Paul's testimony in 2 Corinthians 7 verse 2. He says, Make room for us in your hearts.

We wronged no one, we corrupted no one, and we took advantage of no one. Wonderful if we can have that testimony. We wronged no one, we corrupted no one, we took advantage of no one.

We kept ourselves as servants, not seeking that other people might serve us, not making other people dependent on us as though we were great benefactors towards them, not taking advantage of a brother or a sister in any way. And there are many places in which we need to hear the voice of the Spirit and judge ourselves in this matter. And then, I want you to see here further, in verse 6 of Nehemiah chapter 5, then Nehemiah says, I was very angry.

Be angry and do not sin. Here's an example of that. Jesus was angry, we read in Mark 3 verse 5. You know why he was angry? Because the Pharisees did not want him to deliver a man who was paralyzed.

He was angry with those Pharisees who took advantage of that poor man who was paralyzed. And if we have the Spirit of Christ, we will be angry with a lot of religious leaders today who are keeping poor paralyzed believers in bondage and won't allow them to listen to the truth. Sure, if we are not angry against such religious leaders, I say we don't have the Spirit of Christ.

Jesus was angry. And Nehemiah was angry. He wasn't angry because they robbed him.

He didn't have any problem. He was all right financially. It was when he saw how one brother took advantage of another, he was very angry.

And we must be angry too when that happens in the house of God. And when I heard their outcry in these words, he was grieved in his heart that a brother could take advantage of a brother like this. And here we are building the walls of Jerusalem.

Here's a brother taking advantage of a brother like this. It can be a husband taking advantage of his wife because his wife is weak and the husband is strong. He just keeps on taking advantage of her.

If a true man of God hears that, he should be angry against such a husband who behaves like that. Sure, that's the Spirit of Christ. Anger against one who takes advantage of someone who is weaker.

There's a lot of it, I'll tell you, among believers. A lot of it among believers taking advantage of the weaker person. And that should stir the anger in our hearts when we see that happening or hear about it happening.

And but, here is a very good example for us to follow. He didn't just rush. Do you see a man who is hasty in his matters? Proverbs 29 tells us he's the worst fool in the whole world.

There are many fools mentioned in the book of Proverbs. The worst of the lot, the top of the list, the biggest fool in the world, is the man who acts hastily in anything. Nehemiah didn't.

You know what he did? I was angry and when you're angry, here's the thing that you should do. Verse 7. I consulted with myself. That means I meditated a little bit.

He didn't rush into action. His anger was right, but he was thinking now, how shall I take action here? How shall I proceed here? And he sought for wisdom from God, no doubt, and then he took action. Like we were saying the other day, we have to rebuke somebody or correct someone in a particular situation and we have to say to ourselves, I have a flesh in which dwells nothing good, I have to take this action, I have to rebuke, I have to correct, but let me remember that I have a flesh in which dwells nothing good and let me now proceed to do righteousness.

And he consulted with himself and then he rebuked these rich people. That's the mark of a man of God, that he doesn't care for the rich people, he doesn't care whether they are nobles and rulers, he doesn't want their money, he doesn't want their influence, he doesn't want any certificates from them for a job for him or for his sons or any recommendation letters or anything. Nehemiah was free.

And anyone who wants to serve God must be free, particularly free of the rich people, because it is the rich who seek to bring God's servants into bondage. And over 90% of so-called full-time workers in this country are slaves to the rich people and to the big people. All over this country, in all denominations, whichever denomination you go to.

Nehemiah was not like that and there was no apostle or prophet in the word of God like that. Jesus was not like that. Nehemiah rebuked them.

Think of a man of God who rebukes the rich people, who rebukes the influential people. Yes, he was free, Nehemiah. And he said to them, you are exacting usury from his brother.

He was not a diplomat putting it all with sugarcoating and all, he told them straight the truth. He says, you fellows are disobeying the word of God. I'm sure he said a lot of other things there.

You're disobeying what God has said through Moses, that you must not take interest from your brother. And there you are doing it. And then he called an assembly against them.

Think of that. He didn't just leave it there, privately rebuke them. He called all the people and exposed them publicly.

The Bible says in 1 Timothy 5, those who sin, rebuke publicly, so that others also may fear. That's Christ likeness. If you're filled with the spirit, you'll do it.

Those who sin, rebuke publicly, so that others also may fear. That's exactly what Nehemiah did. He called them out in public, and then he rebuked them again.

Verse 8. And I was, I said to them, we, according to our ability, have redeemed our Jewish brothers who were sold to the nations. And now you're going to sell your brothers that they may be sold to us. And he spoke very straight.

He says, we have given, Nehemiah sacrificed so much in order to help these Jews. And he says, you fellows are sitting here trying to take advantage and thinking of your own profit and your own gain. He says, you can't have that spirit in Jerusalem.

Nehemiah was a strict man. He was strict with the enemies outside the gate, and he was strict with these carnal people who were sitting inside the church. We need to do that if we want to build the body of Christ.

Just building the walls alone is not enough if we don't have discipline inside the church. There are a lot of passages like that in the New Testament. Discipline inside the church.

You remember in Acts chapter 6, how the murmuring came about the widows not receiving enough. That's how the devil tried to infiltrate in the Acts of the Apostles. Here was a powerful movement of revival that you read in Acts 5. People were afraid.

They were seeing the power of God in the church, and the devil got in in the midst of the church and began to create murmuring. The Greeks versus the Jews. This community versus that community.

This is not a 20th century thing. It started in Acts chapter 6. This community versus that community, which God was trying to destroy through the cross. There the apostles had wisdom, and they sorted it out, that problem, before it became too serious.

And we have to always be on the alert that such things never crop up, and they can crop up inside the walls because the flesh is still there. And that's why we see that God had to use Nehemiah like this, with great strictness, otherwise corruption would have got inside Jerusalem. And then, after he had silenced them, we read in verse 9, then again I said, the thing which you are doing is not good.

Shouldn't you walk in the fear of God because of the reproach of the nations, our enemies? He challenged them to say, can you say that you are walking in the fear of God when you disobey what God has told you to do? No, you're not. You're not living in the fear of God. That's the thing that he challenged them to.

Do you fear God? Nehemiah feared God, and he challenged the other people to live and walk in the fear of God. And that is the challenge that must come to us inside the walls of Jerusalem all the time. All the time.

When you take advantage of your wife, brother, are you walking in the fear of God? When you take advantage of a weaker brother, are you walking in the fear of God? No, you're not. There you disregard the fear of God altogether. When you take advantage of someone who's working under you, are you walking in the fear of God? No.

Then, it's no use talking about the walls of Jerusalem. The judgment has to begin in the house of God first. And Nehemiah was ready to do that.

And he says, likewise I, my brothers, verse 10, and my servants are lending them money and grain. Now he says, leave off this usury. Verse 11, please give them back this very day.

Don't wait till tomorrow. Their fields, their vineyards, their olive groves, their houses, and also the interest. The hundredth part of the money means the one percent per month that you were collecting.

And the grain, and the new wine, and the oil that you were exacting from them. Exacting has got the meaning of sort of squeezing it out of them. You jolly well have to pay that.

And when they saw this man of God standing there with the Holy Spirit supporting him, they really got scared. Verse 12, they said, we'll give it back. It'll require nothing from them.

We'll do exactly as you say. They didn't return it like Zacchaeus, joyfully. They returned it out of fear.

And I called the priests and took an oath from them that they would do according to this promise. I also shook out the front of my garment. That was a symbolic way by which he was invoking a curse upon them.

If they didn't keep that word and said, thus may God shake out every man from his house and from his possessions who does not fulfill this promise. You see, Nehemiah knew it's all right here. This great assembly is gathered.

These rich people have been put on the spot and now they have to say, yes, yes, we will return it. But you know, they go home and their wives will tell them something and say, no, no, no, that's not a good thing. You said there publicly and make them change their mind.

You know how it is when the men go home, the women come up to them and say, why did you go and make that promise to that person and all that? And Nehemiah knew all that. So he said, now I'm going to make you fellas swear an oath here so that nobody's going to make you change your mind. He said, and may God throw you fellas out of your homes if you don't keep your promise.

He really put the fear of God into them. Wonderful man of God he was. And he says, thus may he be shaken out and emptied.

And the whole assembly said, Amen. And they praised the Lord. Yes, because their one God-fearing man put a fear into all these rich people.

Brothers and sisters, it is impossible to build the church of Jesus Christ unless you have men like Nehemiah. It is impossible. The rich people will come and corrupt the whole thing.

The strong soulish people will come and corrupt the house of God unless we preserve the purity of the church by teaching people to live in the fear of God and walking in humility and not with this selfish, grabbing, seeking my own spirit. That's got to be driven out of the church. This grabbing, calculating attitude towards our brothers and sisters.

There's 1% more that he owes me. That's what he says there. 100th part of the money.

1% more of this calculating attitude towards one another. God wants to free us from that. Otherwise the walls of Jerusalem are no use.

We've got to judge ourselves in the church inside and to say Amen to that and to praise the Lord for that. That's a good thing. Then the people did according to this promise.

Praise God that they were willing to obey. And so we see that the severity of God, God is severe and He is kind. And I see that beautifully pictured in Ezra and Nehemiah together.

Nehemiah manifesting God's severity and Ezra manifesting God's kindness. And together they could work and show God to the people. And now verses 14 to 19 Nehemiah gives us a little description of the example of his own life in this financial area.

You see that it was because his own life was like this described in verse 14 to 19 that he had such authority when he stood up to rebuke all these people. Notice how Nehemiah lived. Moreover from the day that I was appointed to be their governor in the land of Judah, that was the king had appointed him from the 20th year to the 32nd year.

I told you he left the king's service for 12 years. He lost all the opportunity for increment and promotion and everything else over there because he wanted to do God's work. Think of that forgetting about increment promotion and all your seniority for 12 years because you want to be wholehearted for God.

I tell you it's rare to find such people now. People who weep over they didn't get an increment one year. They didn't get their promotion in time.

They're a million miles away from Nehemiah. It was a man who was willing to go 12 years away from his secular job in order to do the work of God. He says neither I nor my relatives have eaten the governor's food allowance.

You see the governor's food allowance was something like the full-time workers food allowance. You know from the people have to give their tithes and the people are to pay their taxes and support the full-time worker or the governor. And he says in verse 15 the former governors who were before me they did that.

They laid burdens on the people. Maybe they got up and preached on tithing and how it's important to support those who are ruling over you and all that and took from them bread and wine and no wonder these rich people flourished because the governors visited their homes and collected money from them and and they wanted it says 40 shekels of silver as the living bible says a hundred dollars a day a thousand rupees a day. You can imagine how much that was worth those days and even their servants domineered the people.

Imagine that. You get a full-time worker who dominates the people and you'll find his wife is also a boss. Yeah I've seen that full-time workers a boss you've got to be scared of the wife too and the wife will chase

around all the little fellows in the assembly to go to the market and get this and go this and that and the servants also the amazing how all these things are being repeated in Christendom today and Nehemiah said this is what the former governors did they took advantage their servants also domineered the people but I did not do so.

Why?

Because I feared God that's all no other explanation I feared God that's why he could challenge these other people in verse 9 he says are you fellows walking in the fear of God or not he can't challenge another person if we are not walking in that same fear of God ourselves and also he says verse 16 I also applied myself to the work on this wall it wasn't just lazily sitting like the other governors enjoying themselves he worked on the wall himself and he did not speculate in any land you know what that means Nehemiah could have thought ah this is a good time to buy land in Jerusalem because prices are going to appreciate and once this city is going to be built it's going to be really something for me and he says he didn't do it this speculation in lands and in shares speculation things

will go up but we will get some profit his mind would have been on that then he says he didn't do it he steered clearly and all my servants were gathered there for the work because the servants are like how the other servants were in verse 15 because the governors were domineering the servants were domineering verse 16 because Nehemiah himself worked on the wall his servants also worked on the wall he was not domineering they were not domineering and that's always the way that the people become like leaders and that is why it's very important that there be examples in the church who can say follow me as I follow Christ and Nehemiah was one like that just like the apostle Paul could tell the elders in Ephesus in Acts chapter 20 in Acts chapter 20 before he left Ephesus he told them he said

I've been with you for three years Acts chapter 20 verse 31 he says there that I've been with you for a period of three years and during these three years verse 33 he said I coveted no one's silver or gold or clothes you know what that means Paul was a full-time worker he says I didn't sit there wishing oh I wish perhaps that rich brother may come and give me a shirt for my birthday that is coveting or he may give give me a fan's material or something or maybe if I visit his house he may give me an envelope with some money in it that is coveting it is not asking that is much worse that is begging this is just sitting in the home and thinking ah who shall I visit today that is where the covetousness begins and to sit there and think who will come with some gift to one's house Paul says I

was not like that for three years I had no interest in all that you know that these hands minister to my own needs verse 34 and to the men who were with me and I taught you by the example of my life the reality of the words of that it is more blessed to give than to receive that's why Paul had authority that's why Nehemiah had authority that is not a question of sitting there and receiving and receiving and receiving but what about a full-time worker has he got to give sure Jesus gave Paul gave which full-time worker are we following the only one who kept receiving was Judas Iscariot we got a choice we can either follow Jesus and Paul or Judas Iscariot Nehemiah had that spirit of Paul now let's turn back to Nehemiah chapter 6 chapter 5 he didn't take the allowance which was entitled to

him he didn't take advantage of the people and it says he worked on the wall he did not speculate in land wonderful examples for us to follow and now verse 17 and 19 see his hospitality 17 and 18 he says at my table just like we read in acts 20 these hands ministered to my necessities and the necessities of those who were with me he says at my table 150 jews and officials came for their meals every day well god had

blessed him with wealth no doubt otherwise he couldn't have fed 150 people in those hard times but he was a man who knew how to use his wealth not just for himself that is the thing and there are very few people like that who know how to use the wealth god gives them for the glory of god for the good of his people for the building of the church and look at his hospitality and

there were these 150 jews who came to us from the nations that were around us people were coming there for meals and his hospitality was not a stingy thing you just give some rice and dal today no it was verse 18 one ox per day think of that i don't know how much an ox weighs but that's plenty for 150 people i'll tell you that one solid ox and six choice sheep and many chicken and all sorts of wine and abundance think of that i just want you to see his generosity the bible says in 1 peter chapter 4 a word about hospitality he says be hospitable to one another without grudging it i just say without grudging because it's possible to be hospitable and then to grudge and then to be stingy in our hospitality nehemiah wasn't like that there are qualifications of a servant of god here in

nehemiah chapter 5 wonderful example and yet for all this feeding all these 150 people i did not demand the governor's food because the servitude was heavy on this people and what is his prayer at the end of all this he says oh god just remember me according to all that i've done just like that thief on the cross lord remember me when you come into your kingdom he doesn't ask for any great reward or any such thing he says lord just think of me and have mercy upon me in the day of judgment because i have been merciful to the people whom you called me to serve and mercy will triumph over judgment in that day for those who have shown mercy to other people like nehemiah and who have sought to deny themselves not seek their own and seek the good of others now we come to chapter 6 and we read

here it came about when it was reported to san balac tobiah and to rest of the enemies that i had rebuilt the wall we don't read much of these enemies in chapter 5 and perhaps you know because they were just sitting back and enjoying the fighting going on in the midst of the believers you see and they didn't need to do anything when the believers were fighting among themselves they could just sit back and enjoy it but now that that problem had got sort of sorted out and so the enemies got active again san balac tobiah and geshen to the rest of our enemies they heard that the wall was rebuilt and that no breach remained in it and that's a wonderful verse that means it was a finished job nehemiah was not like one of these thirupati babas who shave half the head and keep the fellow waiting

there no it was none of these half-finished jobs that he went about doing he does a complete job there's very few people today who are interested in doing a complete job and jesus said go and make disciples people make converts shave off their heads and keep them there who's going to make them into disciples nehemiah did a complete job god gave him one job go and make the wall and here's the testimony no breach remained in it it is finished that spirit of jesus christ the spirit of the finished work nehemiah had and that's what we must have if god entrusts a task to your brothers and sisters you really do it wholeheartedly till you finish it that can be in an assembly it's possible in an assembly right in the beginning when we say who can volunteer for the maintenance and who can

volunteer for this who can volunteer for that and a whole lot of enthusiastic people who all give their names the big list of names but when it comes to doing the job yeah you find that convenience yeah it requires inconvenience to build the wall there was a finished job nehemiah said he would do something he made sure he did it otherwise he should have told god right in the beginning sorry i've got other things to do lord i can't do that but he committed himself to something and he made sure it was done that spirit he was faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much that's why it's important that we don't try to take on

too many things more than we can handle but if you take it on we must finish it there was no breach remaining in it i believe the lord is looking for people

like that you read in the book of ezekeil the prophet ezekeil prophesied out there in babylon when the people were there and nehemiah had read the prophecy of ezekeil and in the prophecy of ezekeil there's a verse like this ezekeil 22 verse 30 where the lord says i searched for a man among them who should build up the wall and stand in the breach that is the same word as here before me for the land i looked for one man who will build up the wall and make sure there are no breaches in it and i found no one but in nehemiah's day he found one he found one who would not seek his own he found one who was willing to be strict and lose his reputation for gentleness and kindness a lot of people love their reputation for gentleness and kindness they'll never be strict even if adultery comes into

the church and god can't use such a man but nehemiah couldn't care less for what people thought about his gentleness and kindness he was strict and he never sought his own he never took advantage of anything he found one as ezekeil god says i'm looking for a man who will build the wall and i found no one someone who will fill up the breaches and here it is here's the man who filled up the breaches there was no breach remaining in it we saw that the wall is a picture of the commandments of jesus brothers and sisters think of it think to build a church where every single commandment of jesus is proclaimed not one breach not one brick or stone left out of the wall that's wonderful to be able to build a church like that i tell you it's almost impossible as we go through this land to find one

church where every commandment of jesus is constantly preached but we want to build one like that in different places every commandment know that there are churches with gaping holes in the walls and the lord says i'm looking for a man who will build the wall without any breaches he's looking even today and may god find such hope in you and in me and in many others and then the enemies are stirred again they are disturbed at this wholehearted preaching of all the commandments and all the holes in the walls are filled up think of the enemies being disturbed because the hole in the walls are filled up and the small commandments are also being preached the small holes are being filled up at san balantin gisham now they tried another tactic we are not to be ignorant of the schemes of satan

they tried various other ways we saw in nehemiah chapter 4 they didn't succeed and now it says they heard that i had rebuilt the wall and no breach remained in it that they came and sent a message to me saying come let's meet together let's have a conference let's have a discussion we'll um you know this ecumenical type of stuff or interdenominational meeting of these were the people who didn't believe in preaching all the commandments of jesus they were the samaritans people who feared god and served their own gods as we saw in second king 17 and they wanted to hold hands with nehemiah the wholehearted servant of god say come let's meet together let's be interdenominational and work together they were planning to harm me but nehemiah said there we see something about him the wisdom he

had i am doing a great work and i cannot come down i don't have time for all your interdenominational conferences god has committed a task to me and i have no time to sit wasting on discussion i have to complete that task i have no time to come down to you sorry i'm doing a great work god has committed a task to me and i'm going to carry on doing it till it's finished why should the work stop while i leave it and come to you nehemiah knew that the others were not wholehearted enough to carry on if he left the place the work would stop he knew he had to be there to keep the walls going up until it was finished like paul kept the spirit of the antichrist out of ephesus as long as he was there and there we see that nehemiah was not deceived even by the sweet words of some of these other

people the verse in proverbs chapter 14 which tells us proverbs 14 verse 15 jesus said be shrewd as serpents we have to be shrewd as serpents proverbs 14 15 it says the simple man believes everything but the wise man considers his steps and when these people came with a message sent a message to nehemiah saying let's meet together nehemiah didn't believe it and i'll tell you something there's no virtue in believing everybody who comes to you no we are to have discernment they were instruments in satan's hand trying to distract nehemiah from the work and brothers and sisters when the devil can't succeed in any other way he will try to distract us from the work that god has committed to us you remember the time when the grecian widows were murmuring in acts chapter 6 you know what the devil

was aiming there let's get peter and james and john now to serve the food you know let's get them to realize that serving the food to these widows is a very humble job to do and you can show your humility peter if you go and serve tables and peter saw through that and he said sorry we have no time to serve tables that's a good work to do we need spiritual people to do it but god has given us another ministry and we have to give ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word not just to serving tables the devil didn't succeed with peter he succeeded with a lot of other people who were called to the ministry of the word and are now wasting their time rotting away as directors of some christian organization or the other behind some table serving a table but nehemiah wouldn't do that he

wouldn't allow himself to be distracted luke chapter 9 verse 62 in the living bible says anyone jesus said anyone who allows himself to be distracted from the work that i plan for him is not fit for the kingdom of god put your hand to the plow and look back you're not fit for the kingdom of god it means that if you are distracted turn back means to be distracted from the work committed to you brothers and sisters god has committed a work to us we can't allow ourselves to be distracted and they sent messages to me four times four times he said sorry i cannot come for all your interdenominational conferences i don't have time i've got something much more important to do than that and then sanbalat they wouldn't give up sent it a fifth time in an open letter that means a letter where the

envelope was not stuck you know when people do that you know what the purpose of that is everybody should read it along the way and the purpose was to get the news around and it was written it is reported among the nations and deacon that's one of those three fellows there says that you and the jews are planning to rebel therefore you're rebuilding the wall false accusation false letters tracks being printed with false accusations against us sure devil's got so many weapons that you are you want to be their king you're trying to get everybody under your thumb you're a diatrophies over there and you're a little pope ruling that place and now i wasn't disturbed by any of these things he says you've also appointed some of your hired men who just get up and praise you and say that there's a

king in judah or like one of the paraphrases say you got a lot of people going around saying brothers nehemiah is the man that we need think of that all these accusations oh saying you just got a bunch of yes men around you who just keep saying yes to you and now he says it's going to be reported to the king so come now fear trying to put fear in their heart the fear of the authority fear of the king and i tell you fear is a tremendous weapon of satan by which he hinders a lot of people from doing god's work putting fear into their heart and he sent a message to him saying well let me paraphrase it it's just a lot of garbage what you've written that's all you're just inventing them in your own mind since your own mind's filled with garbage it's come out of it that's all they were trying

to frighten him and thinking that they'll become discouraged with the work and it won't be done he says oh god strengthen my hand think of nehemiah no discussion no sending another letter big letter back proving

all the things all the point number one point number two point number three and arguing back you can say what you like brother i have no time just commit the matter to god oh god just strengthen me i want to build the wall i have no time to waste writing another tract against these people for what they've written against me no time for all that let them do what they like we live before god's face and continue filling up the breaches in the wall continue teaching obedience to all the commandments of jesus no matter what they may say whatever they may accuse us of of dictatorship or

potpourri or anything and then we see here further nehemiah has dealt with these enemies outside and again you find the enemies inside these some compromisers still sitting inside jerusalem and when i entered the house of shemaiah shemaiah the son of deliah and son of metabal he was a jew he was not a samaritan and it says here in the margin he was shut up at home and when you read the context you find that this man was supposed to be i mean he claimed to be some type of prophet and even he said he was shut up at home means he was there having a quiet time trying to listen to god and he was just a deceiver maybe one of the fellows appointed by one of the former governors to help him get his money or something like that and he came to nehemiah and he said this is spiritual fellow you know

it's not like all these carnal people out there this fellow's got all the pious language he says let's meet together in the house of god i'm sure his language was very pious and his tone was very pious when he said all that he claimed to have a message from god within the temple this is what the lord says i was waiting on the lord brother i was shut up in my house and i was waiting on the lord and the lord spoke to my heart to come and give you this message have you heard this type of stuff there's a lot of these self-appointed prophets going around the world today i was waiting on god brother and god's asked me to give you this message let us go into the house of god and let's be there because the people are coming to kill you thus says the lord they have come to kill you and let us

close the doors of the temple the deceivers inside jerusalem and nehemiah said what do you mean you think a man like me should run away and go and hide in the temple to save my life you remember when in acts 21 people in the spirit told paul thus says the lord you are not to go to jerusalem paul said all rubbish i don't believe that i'm willing to lose my life you're afraid that i lose my life that's why you're inventing these prophecies a lot of prophecies like that today that says the lord you must marry so-and-so you must go here you must do that garbage bin that's a place for all that and paul nehemiah said no i'm not afraid i will not go in no matter what you may say there's a word there for us nehemiah was a man who was not afraid of death he was willing to lose his life for the

lord's sake and that's why god could use him and he was not going to be deceived by any fellow coming up and saying brother god spoke to me and then verse 12 i perceived that god had not sent him this is what indicates that the man had claimed that god had sent him but nehemiah says i perceived nehemiah was a man of revelation the spirit witness to his spirit something wrong with this man something not straight about this brother i want to tell you brothers and sisters if we walk with a clear conscience the spirit will witness when we meet different brothers something not straight about this person some guile in this person the spirit will say that we can perceive something better we need to walk with god like that nehemiah perceived but that he uttered this prophecy because tobiah and

son ballat had paid ah there we see he was a paid prophet paid by these rich opposes babylonian merchants at paid the babylonian merchants have got that paid prophets who have that quiet time and claim to hear something from god they can even relate visions and dreams to hinder the work of god to frighten god's servants and he was hired for this reason that i might become frightened and act

accordingly in sin there we see something to be frightened it's to sin did you see that verse 13 that i might become frightened and sin why is being frightened a sin because it is saying to god you don't care for me you don't love me you won't protect me you'll take me halfway across the river and you'll dump me there isn't that a sin that's a sin of fear and nehemiah said these people said all this to

frighten me so that i might sin and then they can have an evil report in order that they could reproach me that is god that is the that is the way of the devil first bring a little fear into your heart then you'll sin and then your testimony is gone three steps starting with first step feeling god doesn't love you he'll let you down he'll dump you halfway across you're you made so many mistakes in your life there there are enough exhortations and teachings and scriptures in the scriptures he has loved us with an everlasting love and if we humble ourselves and turn to him he will never forsake us no matter how much we have failed there's no need for fear nehemiah recognized that fear can paralyze my effectiveness for god you know how paralysis is something so dreadful none of us would like

to be paralyzed think of lying in a bed but do you know what paralyzes believers fear earthly fear paralyzes us if only we could see that our spirit is paralyzed just drive it out with the love of god god has given us the spirit of love not of fear and he just prays to god and says oh god remember me remember tobiah and sanbalat according to these works of theirs there was a woman prophetess too i tell you these women prophetesses are also after god's servants and the rest of the prophets are trying to frighten them the devil's got agents there with prophets and prophetesses coming and trying to give all types of messages to god's servants to try and lead them astray to try and puff them up and hinder them trying to frighten them the leaders are always the number one targets of satan's

attack that's why paul said brethren pray for me because he was such a target of satan's attack to every church he would have that request brethren pray for me and i'm sure those churches prayed for paul and we'll probably discover in eternity that if paul was kept till the end it was not only because of his own wholeheartedness but also because the believers prayed for him we need to pray for those who are in the front line because they are the targets of satan's attack well nehemiah overcame it all and finally it says here in verse 15 so the wall was completed that one word so wonderful word but all this battle and fighting and strictness thus that one word so describes all that we have studied today so with nehemiah's uncompromising attitude and his generosity and his unselfishness so

the wall was completed in 52 days what was not done for 90 years the jews had come back from babylon 90 years ago but for 90 years nothing happened temple was built nothing more than nehemiah came along and in 52 days less than two months the job was done that was a wholehearted man and it came about when all the enemies heard it and all the nations surrounding us saw it they lost their confidence they recognized the work had been accomplished with the help of god they recognized that god was in our midst and that's the mark of the new testament church we read in 1 corinthians 14 25 that an unlearned man comes into your midst and he hears the word of god and he says god is here god has spoken to me the secrets of his heart are made manifest and he says god is here that's what they said

there they recognized that god was in their midst and also in those days many letters went from the nobles of judah to tobiah and tobiah's letters came to them because many in judah were bound by oath to him because he was the son-in-law of shekiniah the son of erah and his son jehonen had married the daughter of mashulam the son of barakai it's a sad thing you see when we've intermarried and there are unconverted relatives intermarried with a heathen and unconverted relatives come and try to influence and try to say speak to him try to hinder god's work that's what we see here tobiah he was a relative of some of

these jews and he had tried to put some pressure on nehemiah through these relatives of his they were speaking about tobiah being a good brother and all that and then went back

and reported my words back to tobiah and tobiah sent letters to frighten me just think of this man nehemiah just think what he was going through with all these fellows just plotting against him and hardly knowing whom he can trust and how he leaned upon god and completed that job that's a tremendous example brothers and sisters we are in as we seek to build jerusalem we'll find there are these two-faced people they'll say one thing to you another thing somewhere else we can have them come into our midst like these people came to nehemiah they said nice things to him and then they went out and reported something bad about him and there this man stood like a rock that could not be shaken and i believe god wants us to be like that shrewd as serpents that we are not deceived by all these

hypocrites and humbugs and these two-faced two-minded people double-minded people who come into our midst but we see through and test everybody by the fear of god and by the sword of the spirit which we proclaim and swing freely in the church and thus in our day also god calls us to build the wall complete for his glory

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