

IV. Nehemiah in Biblical Perspective  
*The Memoirs of Nehemiah - Arise and Build*  
“The Nehemiah Model and Ministry Maxims”  
Nehemiah 3  
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September 11, 2011 – Morning Sermon

We are in our fourth study on Nehemiah, in Nehemiah 3. I want to backup first and start in Nehemiah 2:17 which says **17** *Then I said to them, “You see the trouble we are in, how Jerusalem lies in ruins with its gates burned. Come, let us build the wall of Jerusalem, that we may no longer suffer derision.”* So he gives them the mission – we’re going to build the walls of Jerusalem. He gives them the vision – God’s people will no longer be distressed and discouraged. Now what do they say? Nehemiah 2:18-20 says **18** *And I told them of the hand of my God that had been upon me for good, and also of the words that the king had spoken to me. And they said, “Let us rise up and build.” So they strengthened their hands for the good work. 19* *But when Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite servant and Geshem the Arab heard of it, they jeered at us and despised us and said, “What is this thing that you are doing? Are you rebelling against the king?” 20* *Then I replied to them, “The God of heaven will make us prosper, and we his servants will arise and build, but you have no portion or right or claim in Jerusalem.”* They are going to arise and build. Now it says in Nehemiah 3:1-2 **1** *Then Eliashib the high priest rose up with his brothers the priests, and they built the Sheep Gate. They consecrated it and set its doors. They consecrated it as far as the Tower of the Hundred, as far as the Tower of Hananel. 2* *And next to him the men of Jericho built. And next to them Zaccur the son of Imri built.*

May God bless the reading of His Word. The grass withers, the flower fades, God’s Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may it be preached for you.

This is a challenging text that I’m about to read and walk you through from promise to performance. Before I get there I want to back up for just a moment. Last week we were challenged to prayer by Dr. Baker and now we’ve come back to Nehemiah. We are looking at the book of Nehemiah for three reasons that the Bible informs us as to how to deal with Nehemiah. Number one, most importantly, the book of Nehemiah is a trajectory pointing us to Christ. When you see Nehemiah leaving his position of privilege to come to the people and remove their shame and distress, you are seeing a picture of Christ, who left His position of exaltation and humbled Himself to remove our shame and distress. So we’re tracking Christ through the book of Nehemiah.

Secondly, in God’s providence we as a people are standing before a great opportunity. The hand of God has been upon us. Here we were three years ago anticipating meeting the needs of this congregation in terms of coming generation by anticipating a 28.8 million dollar building project. God’s people responded wonderfully and then the leaders gave us some principle leadership that put it on hold while we focused on mercy and missions. Then we come back to it and God’s hand says “Okay I’m going to wipe 20 million dollars out of this. Let’s go 8.8 and here’s a more flexible building, something more unique” and the hand of God is all over it. So the book of Nehemiah is also a model that when God’s people have to engage in facility renovation or expansion, how do you do it? So it’s a spiritual journey of growth. Not only are the

facilities embraced to facilitate ministry but how do you do it so that in the process you actually grow individually and as a church?

In Nehemiah 1, Nehemiah inquired about the city and God's people and the reply was "the people are in distress, discouraged and bearing the shame of their sin. They have broken covenant with God and the walls after almost 200 years are still down. The gates are still burned." So Nehemiah immediately goes to prayer in Nehemiah 1. As he goes to prayer he begins to approach this issue. It's not only the walls that need to be built but the people need to be built. So he takes on in the first seven chapters the building of the wall in a manner that he can address the building of the people and the building of the city of God in the last chapters of the book of Nehemiah.

The third trajectory is that the city of God is not a physical location anymore. The city of God, the church of God is found among all the nations and all the cities but its walls are down. Here is where I'm in a great dilemma. I'm in a great dilemma because there is much about the book of Nehemiah that I want to say from my heart to you about rebuilding the walls of the church in this country that we may again be a part of what God is doing in a powerful way around the Kingdom. That has to be done. What does that mean to rebuild the walls? Beyond physical facilities what would that mean today? But then again also God has given us the opportunity to use this so that we can carefully follow a model and how God has given us some physical walls that enable us for coming generations to reach the next generations of our students and our children with facilities that facilitate this marvelous ministry that is already in place.

I want you to be patient with me as I walk you through these next few chapters for these next few weeks focusing on that matter of the Nehemiah model to keep us on track with the spiritual journey as we address how you do a renovation in a facility expansion. What kind of patience is that? I'm going to circle back when this is done. I will bring us back to the book of Nehemiah not in as much detail but in some very pointed points about what I believe is before us. So between now and Christmas I want to circle back to what it means to inspect the walls and rebuild the walls in terms of how this lands in the New Testament, the city of God, the people of God and the temple of God. This one right now is before us where the marvelous hand of God has been displayed to us and so we tried to follow this model like Nehemiah.

When Nehemiah asked those first two questions and got his responses he then made two responses of his own. He mourned and he wept for days and he fasted and prayed. What we have asked God, not to just check the box to have a prayer time and prayer walk but God will You take this moment to build in the life of this pastor, his family, these members, their families, our leaders, their families, a lifestyle of the priority of prevailing intercessory prayer, using this moment for this greater purpose, to make us men and women of prayer.

When you get to Nehemiah 2 you see answered prayer. Nehemiah has the king's letter that sends him. He has the king's protection. He had a stimulus program. The king gave him funds to rebuild the walls, to rebuild the gates. He even gave him timber to build his own house while he is going to be there twelve years as governor. It's amazing to see how God had answered prayer in Nehemiah 2. Of course on the way Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem tried to give him a hard time but that didn't stop him. He was there secretly for three days. He walked around the city inspecting the walls and then came to the people and said "Alright we have a mission to rebuild the walls. We

have a vision where God's people and God's city will not be in reproach any longer. It will be a place where the glory of the Lord is seen." They heard how the hand of God was with him so they stood up and said "Let's arise and build." What a great response. You can just hear the unanimity and see the excitement. God's hand is all over this.

I love what it says next. The hand of God was with them so they strengthened their hands for the work. God's strength and then through them they would arise and build. Now we have that process. The very first thing that happens is Eliashib, who is the high priest, with his attending priest go to the Sheep Gate. It's interesting that they start at the northeast corner which is where the Sheep Gate was where you brought the sheep through for sacrifices in the temple. So where are we starting? We are starting at the place of worship – priest – leadership. We are starting at the place that would lead to worship. Then they worked their way all the way around the wall counterclockwise. They are going to give us a little journey. So here in Nehemiah 3 is a summation of what happened over 52 days. I haven't found one pastor who took the time to read through Nehemiah 3 in a sermon and I understand why. It's because of all these names.

I told my daughter and son in law who are expecting a baby, "There are some great names in here." What I want you to see here when we see arise and build, it's one thing to promise but it's another thing to perform. They rose up and they built. They started with the leadership all the way through citizenship, all the way around the city and they start at the Sheep Gate and end at the Sheep Gate. As I read this I want you to listen for certain phrases. The reason I'm going to read this is because I believe all Scripture is profitable, inherent and inspired and that includes this passage. This is a history of God working with His people so don't dismiss it. You'll hear phrases like "in front of", "opposite of" and over forty times you'll hear "after him", "next to him" and you'll hear almost 46 times "they built" or "they repaired." So let's see this. Let's walk through this. We already read Nehemiah 3:1-2 so let's start at verse 3.

Nehemiah 3:3-5 says **3** *The sons of Hassenaah built the Fish Gate. They laid its beams and set its doors, its bolts, and its bars. 4 And next to them Meremoth the son of Uriah, son of Hakkoz repaired. And next to them Meshullam the son of Berechiah, son of Meshezabel repaired. And next to them Zadok the son of Baana repaired. 5 And next to them the Tekoites repaired, but their nobles would not stoop to serve their Lord.* Don't you love the honesty of God's Word? If I'm writing something and I want to puff up certain people I would have never put that in there. The Tekoites built without their leaders. The people with the resources and the position didn't show up. They would not stoop to serve the Lord. It's amazing honesty in Scripture, isn't it? Let's continue.

Nehemiah 3:6-8 says **6** *Joiada the son of Paseah and Meshullam the son of Besodeiah repaired the Gate of Yeshanah. They laid its beams and set its doors, its bolts, and its bars. 7 And next to them repaired Melatiah the Gibeonite and Jadon the Merothite, the men of Gibeon and of Mizpah, the seat of the governor of the province Beyond the River.* (These people don't even live in the land. They live across the river.) **8** *Next to them Uzziel the son of Harhaiah, goldsmiths, repaired. Next to him Hananiah, one of the perfumers, repaired, and they restored Jerusalem as far as the Broad Wall.* I have been to Jerusalem eleven times now and every time I go to that place you can see a section of the Broad Wall. You look down forty feet and every time I see that I always read Nehemiah 3. This is what was happening right here. They built the wall in front of their own house. You can just see history right there. Let's continue.

Nehemiah 3:9-12 says **9** Next to them Rephaiah the son of Hur (By the way, this is where the title of the movie Ben Hur came from. Ben means son.), ruler of half the district of Jerusalem, repaired. **10** Next to them Jedaiah the son of Harumaph repaired opposite his house. And next to him Hattush the son of Hashabneiah repaired. **11** Malchijah the son of Harim and Hasshub the son of Pahath-moab repaired another section and the Tower of the Ovens. **12** Next to him Shallum the son of Hallohesh, ruler of half the district of Jerusalem, repaired, he and his daughters. Up to this point we had been having sons help with the repairs and now we have daughters showing up.

Nehemiah 3:13-27 says **13** Hanun and the inhabitants of Zanoah repaired the Valley Gate. They rebuilt it and set its doors, its bolts, and its bars, and repaired a thousand cubits of the wall, as far as the Dung Gate. (One commentator said wouldn't it have been smart to get the perfumers to build at the Dung Gate?) **14** Malchijah the son of Rechab, ruler of the district of Beth-haccherem, repaired the Dung Gate. He rebuilt it and set its doors, its bolts, and its bars. **15** And Shallum the son of Col-hozeh, ruler of the district of Mizpah, repaired the Fountain Gate. He rebuilt it and covered it and set its doors, its bolts, and its bars. And he built the wall of the Pool of Shelah of the king's garden, as far as the stairs that go down from the city of David. (They just uncovered the stairs of David and I had the privilege to walk down them the last time I was there.) **16** After him Nehemiah the son of Azbuk (There are three Nehemiahs in the Bible and this is another one), ruler of half the district of Beth-zur, repaired to a point opposite the tombs of David, as far as the artificial pool, and as far as the house of the mighty men. **17** After him the Levites repaired: Rehum the son of Bani. Next to him Hashabiah, ruler of half the district of Keilah, repaired for his district. **18** After him their brothers repaired: Bavvai the son of Henadad, ruler of half the district of Keilah. **19** Next to him Ezer the son of Jeshua, ruler of Mizpah, repaired another section opposite the ascent to the armory at the buttress. **20** After him Baruch the son of Zabbai repaired another section from the buttress to the door of the house of Eliashib the high priest. **21** After him Meremoth the son of Uriah, son of Hakkoz repaired another section from the door of the house of Eliashib to the end of the house of Eliashib. **22** After him the priests, the men of the surrounding area, repaired. **23** After them Benjamin and Hasshub repaired opposite their house. After them Azariah the son of Maaseiah, son of Ananiah repaired beside his own house. **24** After him Binnui the son of Henadad repaired another section, from the house of Azariah to the buttress **25** and to the corner. Palal the son of Uzai repaired opposite the buttress and the tower projecting from the upper house of the king at the court of the guard. After him Pedaiah the son of Parosh **26** and the temple servants living on Ophel repaired to a point opposite the Water Gate on the east and the projecting tower. **27** After him the Tekoites repaired another section opposite the great projecting tower as far as the wall of Ophel. I thought the Tekoites had already built a section of the wall without their leaders, yet they showed up for another section opposite the great projecting tower. Let's continue.

Nehemiah 3:28-32 says **28** Above the Horse Gate the priests repaired, each one opposite his own house. **29** After them Zadok the son of Immer repaired opposite his own house. After him Shemaiah the son of Shecaniah, the keeper of the East Gate, repaired. **30** After him Hananiah the son of Shelemiah and Hanun the sixth son of Zalaph repaired another section. After him Meshullam the son of Berechiah repaired opposite his chamber. **31** After him Malchijah, one of the goldsmiths, repaired as far as the house of

*the temple servants and of the merchants, opposite the Muster Gate and to the upper chamber of the corner. 32 And between the upper chamber of the corner and the Sheep Gate the goldsmiths and the merchants repaired.*

There's another whole story here if you take these names and work through the book of Ezra that's an amazing study to work through these names and the positions these people occupied but I just want to bring out five takeaways for you from this text in terms of this Nehemiah model. How many of you have ever been in a church with a capital campaign for facility expansion or renovation? How many of you have ever heard the phrase 'not equal gifts, but equal sacrifice'? You were in the same building campaign I was in. Why do we say not equal gifts but equal sacrifices? And why gifts and why sacrifice? It is rooted right here in Nehemiah 3. That's the model. Let me give you the five takeaways.

The first maxim whenever you enter ministry is prayer and preparation are foundational. It's not an add-on. Intercessory prayer and preparation are foundational. How would you entitle Nehemiah 1? Nehemiah prays. How would you entitle Nehemiah 2? God answers prayer. Nehemiah prayed and then he went to the king and said "King, I have three requests – would you send me, protect me and would you give me resources for the job?" The king says "yes" and Nehemiah says "The hand of God is upon this." Then Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem try to stop him and Nehemiah says "You're not going to stop me. You can't stop me. The hand of God is upon me." This is answered prayer. He doesn't step out and say "I'm here. God send me. Let's rebuild the walls." He takes three days and privately, secretly with a few friends he goes and inspects the walls. Do you see how wise that is?

First of all, he went privately. What if he had taken the people with him, saw how big the job was and got discouraged and would have never shown up. He went to get a personal assessment. Where do you think the ability for these plans came from? Why did they start at the Sheep Gate? The building of the wall follows the circuit that Nehemiah rode that night. Nehemiah not only prayed for God's power but he prayed for God's wisdom. God gave him the wisdom when to announce the mission, the vision and when the people heard the mission and the vision and the hand of God, instead of being discouraged they were encouraged. They said, "Let's rise up and build." When you see the wall was built in 52 days it tells you there was some preparation. Who is building where? Who will take here? You see this coordination and preparation and it all took place out of making prayer and preparation foundational. What man goes out to fight the enemy that he doesn't count the cost or builds a house and doesn't count the cost?

The second takeaway is opposition and discouragement are inevitable. We haven't even gotten through Nehemiah 3 and already opposition has risen up three times. Three times? In Nehemiah 2 Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem tried to stop him and then he went which is opposition number one. After the people said they wanted to rise up and build, Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem didn't like what they heard so they came and trashed talked them. They tried to taunt them and jeer them and that didn't stop them. So that's two now where's the third. How would you like to show up to work and your leaders or nobles don't even show up? How do you think the Tekoites must have felt when the people who had the resources and the leadership wouldn't stoop to serve the Lord? This was beneath them. We'll let somebody else do that. You not only get opposition and attempts at discouragement from the outside but you also get it from the

inside. In fact, we'll see three more before we finish this study of Nehemiah. Opposition and discouragement are inevitable from the inside and the outside.

The third takeaway is unity and diversity are mandatory. I know the leaders of the Tekoites didn't show up and others who didn't as well but look at all the rest of them. Look at the coordination and the unity among these people. There was no backbiting. You didn't hear "why did I get the Dung Gate, that's the smelly job." There are only two times Nehemiah gets angry but right now as they rise up there is unity where they all strengthened their hands for the work. They are rising up as one man to build this thing that had laid waste for 200 years. Thirteen years earlier Sanballat, and Tobiah trash talked Ezra and everything stopped but it didn't stop this time. This time they went on as one man together but look at the diversity – men, women, sons, daughters, Giles, perfumers, goldsmiths, old, young, leaders and citizens. Look at this tapestry of diversity. There were residents and non-residents as well. The people from Jericho, Mizpah, Gilboa, beyond the river and the Gibeonites came up to help.

Some might be thinking about this building campaign, "I don't have kids. My grandchildren aren't here." Sure you have kids and grandkids. Those baptismal vows you took gave you covenant children and covenant grandchildren but even if you don't see that what about the coming generations if Jesus Christ carries that you would want to raise up a banner for Christ here when you're long gone? What about reaching and disciplining to them? I'm amazed at the non-residents that showed up.

The fourth takeaway is leadership and sacrifice are essential. It's no accident that the passage starts off that the high priest stands up and leads the way. This is sacrificial. People are strengthening their hands. They are in a time of famine. For 200 years the walls have been down. There is economic distress but they reach for that which God had put before them and they gave sacrificially. I want to be very careful. Honestly, if perchance we had 8.8 million dollars, I'm not sure I would want to say "What about this whole thing anyway because sacrifice brings ownership." I know in the 1980s there were some people in this congregation that sacrificed for the worship of God in this place and when I came here as a pastor, one of the things on my heart was I knew people had made an investment of their lives that worship that would please God would take place in this place. When I see the educational building I know in the early 1990s some people made some sacrifices to make sure our children were educated. Then I watched people in my first year here give sacrificially to remove the rest of the debt here.

I know they made those kind of commitments before me, now what am I doing? I am benefitting but am I a benefactor for coming generations or is this thing really all about me? Leadership and sacrifice are absolutely crucial. In other words, there is a reason they didn't do it with the tithe. There is a reason they didn't do it with the grain offerings. There is a reason they all reached back and did something sacrificial and gave for it. All Nehemiah is doing is following the model before him. I'd like to look in I Chronicles 29. This all happened before him when the temple was first built by David.

I Chronicles 29:1-6 says *1 And David the king said to all the assembly, "Solomon my son, whom alone God has chosen, is young and inexperienced, and the work is great, for the palace will not be for man but for the LORD God. 2 So I have provided for the house of my God, so far as I was able, the gold for the things of gold, the silver for the things of silver, and the bronze for the things of bronze, the iron for the things of iron, and wood for the things of wood, besides great quantities of onyx and stones for setting,*

*antimony, colored stones, all sorts of precious stones and marble. 3 Moreover, in addition to all that I have provided for the holy house, I have a treasure of my own of gold and silver, and because of my devotion to the house of my God I give it to the house of my God: 4 3,000 talents of gold, of the gold of Ophir, and 7,000 talents of refined silver, for overlaying the walls of the house, 5 and for all the work to be done by craftsmen, gold for the things of gold and silver for the things of silver. Who then will offer willingly, consecrating himself today to the LORD?" 6 Then the leaders of fathers' houses made their freewill offerings, as did also the leaders of the tribes, the commanders of thousands and of hundreds, and the officers over the king's work. Then it describes what they do.*

So David led and then after he led the leaders led and we'll get the opportunity for that in just a couple of weeks. Some of the leaders of this congregation have decided to make a commitment to encourage God's people. We don't want to be where the Tekoite leaders were. We want to be right up front and it is a joy to serve the Lord. Nehemiah saw this and just followed this pattern. You see this in Nehemiah 5 and we'll conclude with this. Here Nehemiah is dealing with more opposition and this is how Nehemiah 5 ends up.

Nehemiah 5:14-19 says **14** *Moreover, from the time that I was appointed to be their governor in the land of Judah, from the twentieth year to the thirty-second year of Artaxerxes the king, twelve years, neither I nor my brothers ate the food allowance of the governor. 15 The former governors who were before me laid heavy burdens on the people and took from them for their daily ration forty shekels of silver. Even their servants lorded it over the people. But I did not do so, because of the fear of God. 16 I also persevered in the work on this wall, and we acquired no land, and all my servants were gathered there for the work. 17 Moreover, there were at my table 150 men, Jews and officials, besides those who came to us from the nations that were around us. 18 Now what was prepared at my expense for each day was one ox and six choice sheep and birds, and every ten days all kinds of wine in abundance. Yet for all this I did not demand the food allowance of the governor, because the service was too heavy on this people. 19 Remember for my good, O my God, all that I have done for this people.*

So Nehemiah like David is very specific about what he gives and gives leadership about what he is going to do. It is all about leadership and sacrifice. The clerical leaders led out. The leaders of the families led out. The leaders of the clans, the tribes, the Gileads, all stepped out and moved forward. Then they all brought sacrificial giving in response along with.

Finally, the fifth takeaway is such sacrificial giving is proportionate, heroic and inspirational. Proportionate – in front of his house he built the wall – big house, big wall – small house, small wall. It is not equal gifts but equal sacrifice. Some were heroic when they said "I'll take that next thousand cubits." Isn't Eliashib up there working on the Sheep Gate, so we'll take Eliashib's house and build in front of it. I don't know what made the Tekoites to double their commitment, whether it was embarrassment over the leaders absence or just their heart or both but I think it's probably both. Here is the heroic giving of people with no vested interest in the city. They live somewhere else but they come and such is the heroic giving.

I'll try to build on this later but this is just to get us started on it. I hope and pray that Jesus comes back before the prayer walk tonight. I cannot tell you how much I pray

for that but if He doesn't then next week we're going to reach this generation but we want to reach this generation in a way for the coming generations and even generations not born. There are new Christians, pastors, missionaries, disciple makers and leaders who are going to come through those facilities and hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ. They will be brought to Him, built up and sent out until Christ comes again.

Prayer and preparation are foundational. Opposition outside and inside and discouragement are inevitable. Unity and diversity are mandatory. We do it together yet praise God for our different stations and responsibilities in life. Leadership and sacrifice are essential. We don't do it on the fly, we own it. We'll have to put off something or change a plan or sell something but God here is my proportion and perhaps some have been moved to that heroic sacrificial giving to take the place of those who couldn't be there or who are there or where the wall is empty.

May the Lord guide us and grant us the ability to build the testimony of the city of God for the generations to come and may this simple act of a facility, expansion and renovation, be a great privilege and opportunity for you and me to grow in Christ together. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the moments we could be together. Thank You for the Lord Jesus. Thank You for this marvelous model that lays before us so that we don't have to go figure it out, we just have to follow it. So move upon us God, so that we'll be men and women of prayer, thoughtfulness, who rejoice in our unity and also rejoice in our diversity. God, may we rejoice also in the privilege of sacrifice and how You're leading us. God, I pray that each person and each family where moms and dads are going to get the opportunity to guide sons and daughters through this will have great spiritual growth through this. Father, I look forward to the day when those facilities are filled with the truth of the Word with boys and girls, students, coming to Christ and being sent into the world for Christ. I pray this in Jesus' Name, Amen.