

The Work of God in Nehemiah

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[0:00] The work of God in Nehemiah. The book of Nehemiah is a construction project. And you could say this is really, today we have got our annual meeting and we'd love you to stay, anyone is welcome to come and stay for the meeting, following this meeting which we'll have a short interlude and then we'll have the annual meeting. But you could say in a way this is part one of the annual report because this is how I put to you a bit of a scriptural challenge today about the work of God, which we are a work of God. And so the work of God is seen in the book of Nehemiah. It's a construction project, a building project and it shows God's people going about God's work, overcoming God's enemies. It tells of a building up, not just of a wall, but of a people, of God's people. And I put to you today that God is building up a people, amen? God is building up a people, he's calling out a people, he's calling together a people, his people, that's us, his church. Let's meet Nehemiah. Nehemiah was serving as a personal cup bearer to the king. And Nehemiah was one of some 15,000 servants they reckoned that the king had.

And he had a key role because he was the cup bearer. He was right there, front and centre, protecting the king against assassination as he would taste the fluid given to the king. He would taste that and make sure that it was safe for the king to drink. Now cup bearers were trusted servants. They often held key roles such as the chief of staff or a minister in the government, history shows. They had a high position of honour. He was a cup bearer.

He was a servant, but he was a man of integrity. He was trusted with that very key role. But otherwise he was just an ordinary man. He wasn't some trained preacher or such. He was an ordinary man, a servant to the king, yet in a position of honour. And here was Nehemiah. This was some 15,000, sorry, 1,500 miles away was Jerusalem. 1,500 miles.

And word reached Nehemiah concerning his beloved city, the city of Jerusalem. And a messenger came and told Nehemiah of the need. And God gave Nehemiah a burden, a burden. Well see through the book of Nehemiah, the work of God, really the work of revival in the person and the book of Nehemiah, in the people of Nehemiah's time. And we see, I put to you how God works, how God works. Firstly, I put to you that revival is the move of God. The move of God. You know, people like to say that about a revival, don't they? They say there was a move of God in Wales. Now God, God moves.

Revival is the move of God. And what does God move? God moves people. Amen. God moves people just like you and me. And men and women, that's who God moves. We see here that a man was moved. God moves on a man, the man Nehemiah. God burdened Nehemiah about the city. And he heard the messenger relay the need of what had happened. In Nehemiah 1 verse 3 it says this, Nehemiah says, 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 also is broken down and the gates thereof are burnt with fire. The messenger says, Nehemiah, the gates are burnt, the walls are burnt.

[3:55] The walls are broken down. These were hard times. And it was a disgrace for a city to be in disrepair. It was a reproach. The city lay in ruins. It was a shambles. And this was the city's defence. The wall of the city was its defence. The walls and the gates gave this necessary protection as a barrier against the people's enemies. What once were walls were now just piles of rubble. And now the people are in danger.

And these city walls of Jerusalem had been in disrepair for over 140 years. Get that. Before Nehemiah came on the scene, they just let it lie there. This rubble. They just would have gone

about their business walking past these walls all broken down. Nobody seemed to bother or care. Nowadays, friends, I put to you, we see the spiritual walls broken down, don't we?

Where society's so-called values are ever more godless. It's like the walls are broken down. The gates are burnt. There's this crying need in our land, in our city. There's a crying need. It should move us. It should move us. What did the man Nehemiah do? He was moved. Nehemiah was moved.

Nehemiah was moved in his day. He was overcome with grief. And God's people were suffering. He felt that. He was moved with compassion. He knew that his city was in danger. And the people were under oppression and suffering hurt and endangered.

And he was concerned about that. He was moved. He grieved. And he humbled himself and he prayed. When God doesn't move, he moves people to pray. That's what he does, doesn't he?

[6:01] He humbled himself and he prayed. We ought to be moved to pray. We ought to be moved to prayer. At the state of our city, of our nation, of our church. The state of the church globally. It's in disrepair, isn't it?

It's much lacking. And we should have a concern. Nehemiah did. Nehemiah was a man of constant prayer. The short book of Nehemiah records 14 prayers of Nehemiah.

The first thing Nehemiah did is the first thing we should do. Pray. Pray. Before he set out on the project, Nehemiah prayed.

When he approached the king, he prayed. When he was in trouble, he prayed. It's right through the book. You know, it's a short book. You can read the whole thing. And it would only take a little time to read it right through.

But we're just picking out some of the noteworthy bits here just in this message today. But have a look at the whole book. You'll get challenged by it. We see chapter 1, verse 4.

[7:08] And it came to pass, when I heard these words, I sat down and wept and mourned certain days and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven. Nehemiah was moved, wasn't he? He was moved to pray.

Verse 5, and he said, I beseech thee, O Lord God of heaven, the great and terrible God, your awesome God. Strike terror in the hearts of those who know you not.

God that keepeth covenant and mercy for them that love him and observe his commandments. Let now thine ear be attentive and thine eyes open and thou mayest hear the prayer of thy servant, 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 we have sinned against thee.

Both I and my father's health have sinned. Verse 11, O 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, for I was the king's cupbearer.

Here was Nehemiah, the servant, the cupbearer of the king, and it was a humble prayer. Before he moved, he prayed, and it was a heartfelt prayer. Nehemiah sought the face of God. He sought the strength of God and the help of God.

[8:24] How easily can we neglect to pray? Are we moved to pray? Pray, brother, sister, let's be moved to pray. How are we praying? As you set out to do something, pray before you start.

Pray as you go, pray when you're under attack while you're doing it. Pray and keep on praying. The king noticed that Nehemiah was downcast. Now there's some months elapsed here.

And in chapter 2, verse 4, the king said unto me, For what dost thou make request? So I prayed to the God of heaven. The king noticed the downcast state of Nehemiah, and he asked, What's happening?

What do you want? And then Nehemiah, before he spoke, he prayed. Maybe it was just a prayer, just an on-the-spot prayer before he opened his mouth. Or maybe it was that he came back to the king.

But notice Nehemiah prayed. He prayed right there and then. Before he gave an answer, he prayed. He was moved to pray. He sought the leading of God. Nehemiah asked the king if he could go take leave to go to his city.

[9:31] And in faith he trusted God. And it was God who put something in Nehemiah's heart. It wasn't that he acted in his own willful, wishful

thinking. God moved in the heart of the man.

And he was moved to take action. Not only did he pray, but he was moved to take action. And not only Nehemiah was moved to take action, but the king was moved.

The king was moved. The king gave him favour. It was an amazing turn of events that the king gave Nehemiah letters of approval for safe conduct. He gave him a party to take him there.

And timber from the king's forest to be used for the wall's reconstruction. And it says there, chapter 2, verse 12, Nehemiah says, I arose in the night, I and a few men with me.

Neither told I any man what my God had put in my heart to do at Jerusalem. Neither was there any beast with me, so the beast that I rode upon. So Nehemiah took action. He got his men around him.

[10:31] And they did a bit of a survey. And he saw the need. He saw. And will we, like Nehemiah, see the need in our city? Will we, like Nehemiah, hear the call to action?

We see how Nehemiah responds to the call. He got up and went. And he looked at the need. And he rallied others. And he testified of the hand of God upon him. Chapter 2, verse 18.

Nehemiah says, Then I told them of the hand of my God, which was good upon me, and also the king's words, that he had spoken unto me. Notice here next that the people responded. The people got moved.

Amen? The people of God got moved. And they said, let us rise up and build. So they strengthened their hands for this good work. Not only was Nehemiah moved, the king was moved.

The people now are moved. This was going to be a great undertaking. This was no small wall.

Some have reckoned perhaps it was four kilometres long. This pile of rubble four kilometres long that had to be rebuilt.

[11:33] And it was two and a half metres thick. This was quite a spacious wall. And when God moves, he moves people. Amen? Others were moved in different ways.

When you step out for God, expect opposition along the lines of what was said earlier. When you move for God, expect others to be moved against you. Some were moved against Nehemiah.

Nehemiah gave them rebuke for withstanding the work of God. We see that chapter 2 verse 20 of Nehemiah. Then I answered them, Nehemiah said unto them, the God of heaven, he will prosper us.

Therefore we his servants will arise and build. But ye have no portion nor right nor memorial in Jerusalem. He told them that they were going to miss out.

Because they were opposing the work. We will, collectively, the people of God, we will arise and build. Nehemiah 3, we see the people got mobilised and they started working together.

[12:33] Families working together. Households working together. Alongside the other households. Alongside one another. Alongside each other.

Because everyone was purposed to play their part. That's like the church, isn't it?

That every part has a function to participate. It was hard work. The people worked, they worked day and night, night and day.

And they completed the wall in 52 days. Yet some only worked half-heartedly. We see that in chapter 3 verse 5. It says, next unto them the Tekawites repaired, but their nobles put not their necks to the work of their Lord.

Now some people have got a half-hearted effort. God moves his people. Let's not be like the nobles who put not their necks to the work of their Lord.

Amen. Let's not be like them. God moved his people and there was a team effort. People got stuck into it. Part of the wall that was near their house, they said, we'll fix this part.

[13:36] And they got onto it. They got busy. Nehemiah 3 verse 8 tells there are different kinds of people. There was goldsmiths. There was apothecaries, which are perfume makers. And there's all numbers of different kinds of people in the passage here around Nehemiah 3 verse 8.

All kinds of people got involved. There was a job for everyone to do. Now the move of God also means moving some rubbish. You know, it's interesting that you could say there's some rubbish to deal with.

You could say some rubbish to get rid of. There was much rubbish. Nehemiah 4 verse 10 it says. And it tells of rubbish. It's interesting the word rubbish occurs two times in the Bible. And it's both about this rubbish here in Nehemiah, the book of Nehemiah. It's got two references to rubbish. And it says in Nehemiah 4 verse 10, The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed. There is much rubbish so that we are not able to build a wall. Some people thought we're not able to do this. It's just too big for us. Now there's some need for some moving, some rubbish removal. [14:46] Amen? Rubbish removal. Revival. The work of God. The work of God is the move of God. God, we see, we should be moved to pray. We should be moved to action.

We should be moved to get rid of rubbish too. Now what could that be? There's all sorts of, you could reflect, is the rubbish in my life, that stuff that accumulates, that stuff that's probably not something to hang on to, something to throw out, isn't it?

You could reflect on that spiritually, couldn't you? What is the rubbish that God is moving me to remove that rubbish? You could say. So the work of God is that the people of God were moved. And also we see that they were minded. Verse 2. Second point. I put to you that they had a change of mind.

We see that in chapter 4, verse 6, that Nehemiah was minded and the people were minded. Something happened in the brain space, in the mind, their mindset. Chapter 4, verse 6. So built with the wall.

[15:56] This was as it was coming to completion. And all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof, for the people had a mind to work. They had a mind to work.

They'd made up their mind to work, to get busy. They'd made up their mind to commit. They had a resolve, a determination. And they said in faith, in chapter 2, verse 20, The God of heaven, he will prosper us.

Therefore, we, his servants, will arise up and build. They'd made up their mind. People of God. We need to make up our mind, don't we? Make up our mind to trust him.

Make up our mind to put our hand to the plough. Make up our mind not to look back. Make up our mind not to be deterred. They made up their mind also to war a good warfare. To war a good warfare.

They made up their mind to work. It says they had a mind to work. That's what I just read. 2.20. 4, verse 6.

[17:02] They had a mind to work. And also they had a mind to war. We'll see that here as we come to chapter 4, verse 17.

It says that they made up their mind to war a good warfare. Friends, this Christian life means we're going to have some battles. We're going to have some obstacles. We're going to have some opposition.

We're going to have some persecution. We're going to have some trouble to tackle. And they made up their mind to war a good warfare. You know, there's a battle on for the minds and hearts and minds of men, isn't there?

There's a battle on for the mind. We see Paul says, For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but are mighty through God, to the pulling down of strongholds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalted itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought into the obedience of Christ.

These builders were ready for battle. They were building and they were battling at the same time. They were mentally ready. They were practically ready. They'd armed themselves in their mind and in their actions.

[18:09] We see that in Nehemiah 4, verse 17. It says, They which build it on the wall, and they that bear burdens with those that laded, those who were carrying things, every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other held a weapon.

It's interesting, you know, they had a sword and a trowel, if you like. They were building with one hand, but they were ready to do battle with the other. They had a sword at hand. And friends, that's like the Christian life, isn't it?

That we know that it's a battle raging, a battle for souls, a battle between God and Satan.

And the battle is won in the mind. Think about Nehemiah. He faced relentless attacks and opposition. It wasn't all plain sailing for Nehemiah.

And often it is for us too. In the Christian walk, in the work of God, in ministry, in building the church of God, there's a war on. People don't always support.

[19:15] Some oppose. You know, Moses had his gainsayers, didn't he? The murmurers and such. There's a war on for the minds and affections of man.

And think back in World War times, many a war is won by propaganda. You know, the Germans, the Nazis, put a lot of effort into broadcasting contrary things to break down the morale. That's one of the enemy's tactics, isn't it? It talks about in the end times, the wearing down of the saints. You know, we're just getting barraged, aren't we? There's a mental assault on all of us. These workers had to be watchers. They were working and they were warring. They were watchmen and they were warriors. And they were ready to sound the trumpet. There's that trumpet again.

Ready to rally to the battle. It says in Nehemiah 4 verse 20, In what place therefore you hear the sound of the trumpet? You know, the shofar, Resort ye thither unto us. Our God shall fight for us.

[20:19] They had to be ready for that alarm to go off. That sound to go off. The sound of the trumpet. Nehemiah faced these battles. Now the battles that Nehemiah faced were often in the mind, I put to you.

And in the people of God too. What did they face? They faced fears. I've got references for all these. They faced fears from some. They faced laziness from others. They faced discouragement, ridicule, even death threats.

Nehemiah battled against strife and wrath. There were lying prophets and deceivers trying to distract him, to make him compromise. And he had to be mentally and spiritually tough to overcome, to resist.

And it's the same for us as the people of God today, isn't it? As the people of God, we need to be minded to work and to war, to have that mindset that we will trust him.

We will be victorious as our faith is battling. And he will do the battle for us. Chapter 5, Nehemiah was appointed as the governor of Jerusalem.

[21:25] And Nehemiah constantly faced subtle attacks as he stood firm. He was minded that this work was too great a work to even stop to debate those who opposed him. We see that in Nehemiah 6 verse 3, where some wanted him to go down and have a kind of compromised kind of meeting.

To try to get him to give ground, I suppose, or to compromise in some measure. And in Nehemiah 6 verse 3, he says, I'm doing a great work.

I cannot come down. Why should the work cease while I leave it and come down to you? Nehemiah was minded. Nothing was going to deter him. He wasn't going to be distracted. He made up his mind.

And the people of God were mindful of the word too. As we come to chapter 8 verse 1, it says, The people gathered themselves together as one man in the street before the water gate. And Ezra the scribe said, They asked him to bring the book of the law of Moses.

Something went on in the mind of the people of God that they wanted the word. We should hide the word in our hearts, shouldn't we?

[22:39] We should want the word to be in our minds. So the words will come to our mind. They gathered together as one man. They wanted to know the mind of the Lord. You know, there's this expression, Who has known the mind of the Lord?

How do we get the mind of the Lord? How do we get the mind of Christ? Read his book. It's in the word, isn't it? It's the will. It's the purpose of God. It's in the word of God. And Ezra stood on a pulpit of wood before the water gate.

And the water speaks of the word as the word is spiritually pictured as water. It's pictured as a washing of water by the word, of spiritual water.

And it talks about a thirst for the word, of thirsting for the words. And in the word it says, For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are my ways your ways, saith the Lord.

And we want to get our minds such that we'll want to be minded by the word. We want to have the mind of the Lord. That this word will cleanse our thoughts, our ways.

[23:47] They gathered together as one man. And in this reviving, this work of God, the word of God was very much front and centre as Ezra delivered it to the people.

And the people were of one accord, as one man. And they said, bring the book. This was truly a work of God. We see the reviving of the work of God.

It wasn't just about the wall. It was about the people. It wasn't just about the wall of Jerusalem. It was about the people of Jerusalem, the people of God. And this was truly a work of God, we see. And we see in the ultimate, the restoration of the ministry of God. We see the restoration of the ministry of God.

The wall was built and now the worship was built. It was restored. In Nehemiah 8 and the closing chapter, it talks about the ministry that was revived.

[24:52] There was a restoring. There was a ministry unto God. It says there was a holy reverence for God and his word. From verse 2 of Nehemiah 8, it says, Ezra brought the word to all that could hear with understanding.

And it says that they read before the water gate from morning until midday. And the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law. So at the opening of the book of the law, the people rose to their feet and they gave heed.

Now, it's been reckoned they stood on their feet for six hours. Now, that's something, isn't it? I didn't get you to do that this morning. But, you know, it's an amazing thought, isn't it?

They revered this book such that they stood on their feet and they heard the preacher read it for six hours straight. And Ezra opened the book and he opened it.

All the people stood up. There was worship too. There was worship. Not only was there the word, you see the word again, but you see there was worship. There was a restoration of worship.

[26:01] As we see the godly worship of Nehemiah 8 verse 6, it says, Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God. And all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands and they bowed their heads and they worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground.

This was truly the work of God, a work of the Spirit of God. There was revival. There was an awakening of the spiritual life of the people of God as the people ministered unto God and as God ministered unto them.

We see revival. For example, Nehemiah chapter 9, we see that they assembled. Verse 1, They assembled with fasting and with sackcloths and earth upon them.

And it says they separated themselves. There was a holiness. There was a separation. And they were reading the word of God, it says. They were reading it. They were taking it seriously. They were studying it.

They were understanding it. There was fasting and sackcloth and ashes. In other words, there was repentance. There was a confession. There was a worship. It was worshipful. And there was a lifting up of their voices unto the Lord in praise.

[27:05] We see that from verse 5. Nehemiah 5. Then the Levite said, Stand up and bless the Lord your God forever and ever. And blessed be thy glorious name in which is exalted above all blessing and praise.

Thou, even thou, art Lord alone. Thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens with all their host, the earth and all the things that are therein, and the seas and all that is therein. And thou preservest them all, and the host of heaven worshipeth thee.

What a blessed crescendo. The book comes to this. The work of God. Not only is the wall built and the worship is restored, but there is this awe of God, this glorifying of God.

And Nehemiah shows how God can restore what is broken. I put to you today that we could do with some of that still, can't we? That God would restore that which is broken.

You know, we know individually what is broken in me. What is it that God wants to rekindle? That first love, that fervour, that zeal, that joy, that love.

[28:15] As a newborn believer, almost like you want to go back there, isn't it, sometimes? To rekindle what love was born in your heart at salvation.

And God can restore what is broken. He can do that still. God can do a work. You know, we hear of revivals of yesteryear, as I mentioned, of Wales. You know, there's different outbreaks of revival where there was a sovereign work of God was done.

And people were moved, weren't they? There was a move that went on as they were moved to pray, as they were moved to seek his face, as they were moved to get things right, to get rid of some stuff, of repenting.

And there was a mind of God, a mind to work, to what can I do, how can I join this work of God, how can I play a part, how can I be useful for God, how can I know his mind, his will, his purpose, how can I know what it is that he would have me to do, and how can I battle this, it's not going to be all easy breezy, there's some battles that I'm going to have to tackle here, and I'm going to have to have my mind set on things above, and I'm going to have to have that word engrafted in my very fibre of my being.

And I'm going to have to be mindful of the ministry of God. How can I minister to him, how can he minister to me, how can he minister through me? There is still an authentic Christianity on this planet today.

[29:55] And we know there's some, it seems lacking, there seems some counterfeit of such. But there is a truly God sent, heaven sent revival, a Bible based revival, that we can believe God for, individually and corporately.

That spiritual quickening, that making alive, that genuine firing up of our zeal for God, a refreshing of it, a restoring of it. When the war was completed, God also revived and restored the spiritual life, and joy of the people of God.

We see there was a reading of the word. Now this isn't just meant to be dusted off the shelf on Sundays. There was a reading of the word.

There was a fasting, and there was a praying, and there was a celebration of spiritual feasts that had long been neglected. They got back to where they should have been, to what they should have been doing.

And let's, on the contrary side, let's not make church about much activity, per se. Because some churches have much activity, but God is not in it.

[31:04] We can be busy doing the wrong things too. And we all need to take stock of that. We could launch multiple ministries, and have you busy every night of the week.

It almost seems like we are. But there's a sense where we don't want to get so busy that we miss. What is it that God wants? What's of his pleasure? What's pleasing him?

What would glorify God in my life, in my family? And in some churches, God is not in it. Sometimes we can get stuck too. You know, it's almost like there's a bottleneck can happen, as such.

I know I was just reflecting as I was minded of this message, and I was down by Carisbrook Park, where Julie and I got married, under a tree there.

And I was by the brook there, and saw the, there was a branch that was stuck, in this flowing stream. And I thought, sometimes we can be like that branch, we can be stuck.

[32:06] And I had to go, and I had to move it. Amen. I had to move it, so that it went down the river. But I'm just making the point, we can be stuck in our Christian life, can't we? God's got to move us.

He's got to shake us. He's got to unsettle us. He's got to shift us, from that stuckness, so we can go with a flow, as it were, in that flowing river, to flow with God.

Just a bit of a picture of that. But friends, the point I'm making here is, how is our spiritual life, the spiritual life, how is it in our church? And one day, we'll enter into eternity, and then, into the very presence of God.

What will we have? Of life lived. These eternal truths, should move us. We should be moved. As Nehemiah was moved, we should be moved.

Moved to prayer, and to action. Because men, can be reconciled to God. This is our message still. It's the same burning message, that has always been. The same burning message, is the message we have.

[33:12] And I know, last Sunday, we were challenged, about getting our boots on. The gospel boots. We need that, don't we? Get your boots on, people. We're the ones, who are going to take the message.

You and me. He doesn't send angels, he sends human beings. Men and women. May we be moved, to shake off that inclination, to be careless. May we be moved, to see that reviving, of our spiritual life.

Seek his face. God can work in you, no matter who you are. And we can be moved, from spiritual slumber, and sleepiness, and slothfulness, to a place of spiritual usefulness.

May the work of God, affect the mind of God in us. Such will be minded to work. We'll have the mind of Christ. We'll have the mind, of the Lord. On what is, the mind of the Lord.

We'll seek it, and we'll find it, in the book of the Lord. And may we have a mind too, to battle on, that our Christian walk, is such that, we will be purposed, to fight, the good fight of the faith.

[34:15] To battle on, to overcome. And may we be mobilised, to ministry, because everyone, has a part to play. Everyone has a station, to occupy, on the wall. A part of the wall, that is yours, to work on.

And such that will minister, unto God. And that God will truly work, in our churches, in our lives, and bring revival. That's what we need, isn't it? I pray today, you'll be encouraged, with these thoughts, of putting yourself, into the action zone.

Now don't get stuck, like that little branch, on that creek. It just, wasn't doing anything, wasn't going anywhere. Let's not get stuck, let's go, where the river sends us.

Amen. Go where the God, would flow you to go, to be, to do. Let's pray. Lord we thank you, that you are, gracious, almighty God. And as you worked, by the faith of Rahab, you worked in grace, you showed mercy.

Lord you do that to us, and for anyone here, that would simply trust you, the blood of Jesus, shed for us. Lord, and that we can be, a people moved, like Nehemiah, and those, with him, will be moved.

[35:33] Lord, will be minded, reminded, will be mindful, of your word. Lord, will be also, mobilised to ministry, that we can, all find a work, that you'd have us to do, to be.

Anyone who's yet, to trust you, that they might say, yes Lord, I want to be, yours. I want to, no, you died on the cross, for my sin, and I trust you now.

Entirely trust you. Lord, that each one, might know that, grace of God. Help us to be a church, that would please you Lord, in every, aspect of what we do.

In Jesus precious name, Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.