

Nehemiah

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[0:00] The Word of God is able to build you up, it says in Acts 20, 32. And Nehemiah is both a book and a man. It means the Lord comforts. And we're going to take a look at the book.

Look at some key themes through the book and about the man. See what the book teaches, what we can learn for our lives today. So firstly, Nehemiah, the book.

It's a book about building. It's how to do a work for God. How can we be a builder, brick by brick? How to be a builder for God.

Each one of us can be a builder for God. And this book has various themes which we're going to touch on. It's quite a big message. I'm going to try to keep it moving quickly through the book.

[0:56] About the man, Nehemiah. About his faithfulness. About God's faithfulness. About the importance of prayer. So we see Nehemiah, the man. The leader.

Nehemiah, the book, is packed with leadership principles. And Nehemiah, the man, was a leader. We see the CV, if you like, of the Nehemiah, the man.

We see he had devotion to duty. Diligence in his planning and his actions. Dedication to the word of God. And dependence on God through prayer.

A life of prayer. Nehemiah, the man. What can we learn? We see his dependability in his very role as the cupbearer of the king. As counsellor.

Chief bodyguard, if you like. The guardian of the king's food. And Nehemiah, as this royal cupbearer, had to be thoroughly trustworthy, dependable.

[1:50] His job depended on him. He had to be such a man that the king could have absolute trust. And that he built up a credibility through his life.

As he served faithfully. And we see that Nehemiah had really the second most important job in the kingdom. Archaeologists tell us, apparently, that in terms of Assyrian salaries, the position of a cupbearer was the fourth highest salary of the kingdom.

Even above that of a justice of the highest court of the day. So it was a very critical position. So Nehemiah lived in this position of honour.

You could say he lived somewhat in ease in the palace. And yet Nehemiah was not one who got inflated and proud with this role. He was humble before God.

And he acknowledged God for his success through his life, as we'll see. So we'll see that Nehemiah had a dependency. And a dependency upon God. He was close in his spiritual relationship to God.

[2:55] As we see that right through the book, there's a theme of prayer in Nehemiah's life. And who did he call God? My God. My God. Eleven times we see the phrase, My God.

He had that personal close relationship with God. And he often turned to God in prayer. He proved his dependability, even living in the midst of a heathen, idol-worshipping nation.

He proved his unwavering faith against many challenges. And now we're going to look through the book. We're going to go to chapter 1 and just take some snippets through, some little snapshots through the book of Nehemiah.

So we see chapter 1 where Nehemiah faced a crisis. It says in chapter 1 verse 3, The wall of Jerusalem also is broken down.

And the gates thereof are burnt with fire. What crisis will you face in your life as a builder for God? As men and women who are here to build a life for God?

[3:56] Times of crisis are going to strike you. And you're going to have to face them. How will you respond? One day this group of Jews came to Sushan, the capital of the Persian Empire.

One was Hanani, Nehemiah's brother. And Nehemiah asked after the welfare of his people. He asked after his people. He asked after his city.

And they replied in verse 3 of chapter 1, 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 Babylonians had ransacked and destroyed the city. They'd taken away its people. And here it was 140 years later.

And the city still lay in ruins. Jerusalem was a shambles. It was a pack of stones. It was surrounded by powerful enemies.

[4:55] This pile of rubble, that was Jerusalem. The people were in trouble. As they were exposed to dangers. The walls were broken down. There was affliction.

There was shame. And there was exposure to enemy attack. To robbers and wild dogs. The walls had to be rebelled. Friends, walls are important for a city.

You go back in time to that day. And where the walls meant protection. They meant separation. The walls were there to keep things out and to keep things in. Friends, there's a problem in our nation today too.

In this nation. Our nation. In our community. In Australia today. The walls are broken down. There's a problem. There's a breakdown of truth. A collapse of morality and biblical faith.

And we have been invaded by the godless today. In our nation of Australia. And they educate our children and our grandchildren. And our churches have been smashed by the wrecking ball.

[5:56] As gospel truth and bible doctrine is getting demolished all around about us. And people scarcely know the truth anymore. What is it? And many Christians are shipwrecked.

As a result. Something needs to be done. The walls have to be rebuilt. Do we see the need?

Nehemiah saw the need. We see then in verse 4 of chapter 1.

Nehemiah's response. Nehemiah's response to this crisis that he faced. It says it came to pass when I heard these words. That I sat down and wept and mourned certain days.

And fasted and prayed before the God of heaven. What was Nehemiah's response? Nehemiah's response was to pray. It was to take a hold of God in prayer.

He was burdened for his people. He wept and he prayed. He had a sensitivity to the need at hand. And Nehemiah's practice of prayer is a feature that's right through the book.

[6:54] Right through the book of Nehemiah. His practice of prayer. This is the record of his life. What about us? When crisis threatens do we stop to think to pray?

Does the need of our nation drive us to prayer? Do we yearn in compassion? Does it lead us to intercession for our people?

For this community where we live? What about in your personal life? When you face problems and concerns? Do you stop to pray? As that first response. As that first response.

Nehemiah did. It's the first thing that he did. He prayed. He prayed first. He prayed earnestly. He prayed continually. Day after day.

In humility. And with godly reverence and fear. It says from verse 5 through 6 of chapter 1. His prayer. I beseech thee O Lord God of heaven. The great and terrible God.

[7:55] In other words the awesome God. God is terrible. He's awesome. In his terror that he strikes. On the hearts of the lost. That keepeth covenant and mercy for them that love him.

And observe his commandments. He says verse 6 of chapter 1. Let thine ear be attentive now. And thine eyes open. That 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 house have sinned.

It was a humble prayer wasn't it? It was a prayer of adoration. Of love. It was a heartfelt prayer. Joy and confession. And repentance before God.

And he acknowledged God's glorious redeeming power. And he prayed for God's mercy and pardon. Verse 11 it goes on of chapter 1. O Lord I beseech thee.

[8:55] 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 cup bearer. Nehemiah's prayer was no token exercise.

We see from the book. That it was actually some four months. He spent in prayer. It was not just some glib token prayer. It was four months. Of arduous prayer.

Prayer. Prayer. Day after day. Day and night. Then we go to chapter 2. Chapter 2. Now we see Nehemiah's courage.

Not only did he pray. He had courage. He went in before the king. As the cup bearer. This was something that he had to be very careful. As much as he had a significant role.

[9:52] He still had to honour the king. And the protocols. As it were. And he took great personal risk. To enter in before the king. In the state of unease that he was in.

It was a dangerous step. A courageous step. For Nehemiah. And the king took notice of his sorrow. And he asked him of his concern. So we go to chapter 2 verse 3.

Nehemiah replied to the king. When asked about his sad composure. He said. Let the king live forever. Why should not my countenance be sad.

When the city. The place of my father's sepulchres. Lieth waste. It was the place of his father's tombs. The place where his ancestors were. Was his heritage. His nation.

He says it lieth waste. And the gates thereof are consumed with fire. Verse 4. Then the king said unto me. For what dost thou make request. It's great to notice right here.

[10:49] As he kind of. It stops kind of half sentence here. And I know Adam's referred to this before. How Nehemiah. As he was in this. Facing this other crisis. Here now. This new test.

As he stood before the king. Quaking in his boots if you like. He breathes a prayer. A prayer. Under his breath almost. Mid conversation. It says. Before he answers the king.

So I pray. To the God of heaven. So I pray. Sort of mid sentence. Mid conversation. So I pray. To the God of heaven. Now this was not some flowery.

Prayer to impress man. This was a prayer. From his very heart. To the very heart of God. And chapter 2 verse 5. It says. And I said unto the king. If it pleased the king.

And if thy servant have found favour in thy sight. That thou would have sent me. Unto Judah. Unto the city of my father's sepulchres. That I may build it. He says. Send me.

[11:44] That I may build it. Send me. That I may build it. How bold. How brave. Of Nehemiah. God honoured his faith and courage. He'd already done the hard yards.

He'd won the king's favour. By a life of dependability. And trustworthiness. And the king granted. He answered his request. And he even gave support. And supplies for the project.

Nehemiah. The cup bearer. Was to become Nehemiah. The governor. And builder. Of the nation. Nehemiah. He left the comforts of the palace.

To go some 1600 kilometres distant. To his troubled land. He was launching out. In courage. In faith. To a mission impossible.

You could say. But. Not everyone was happy. Here's a picture of someone. Who left our church a little while back. Critics.

[12:40] Critics came on the scene. Critics came on the scene. When you stand up for God. Expect critics. Expect it. It's to be expected.

It's part of the course. It's part of standing for God. That you can expect opposition. As you stand up for truth. It's part of the whole package.

It's part of the package deal. In chapter 2 verse 10. It says. When Sanballat the Horonites. And Tobiah the servant. The Ammonite heard of it. It grieved them exceedingly.

That there was come a man. To seek the welfare. Of the children of Israel. Nehemiah would have. Some persistent enemies. Yet. God gave Nehemiah.

A clear vision. He could see beyond. That. Discomfort. He could see the vision. Of what God. Wanted him to do. God's purpose. God's plan. God had put it on his heart.

[13:35] To build the wall. To rebuild. The walls of Jerusalem. So when he arrived at Jerusalem. He took a good look. At the condition of the city. Verse 12 of chapter 2.

He arose in the night. I and some few men with me. Neither told I any man. What my God. Had put in my heart to do. He got on his beast.

And he rode around. In cover of darkness. Out of sight of the enemy. And took a bit of a. A sortie. A bit of a wrecking. Of the scene.

To check out. The situation. It says. Verse 13 of chapter 2. That he went through the various gates. Viewed the walls that were broken down. And the gates consumed with fire.

He could have. He had a vision. For what God. Had told him to do. Then Nehemiah. As a godly leader. Had to. Engage others. In the vision.

[14:29] To motivate the people. And when you are a builder for God. You want to harness others. To chase after God. To stand for God. To stand for God. To build for God.

And that's what Nehemiah did. He was a motivator. He motivated the people. To join the cause. To build up. In their faith. And to join in. In the mission. Come.

And let us build the wall. That was his call. Chapter 2. Verse 17. He said to the people. You see the distress we are in. How Jerusalem life wastes. And the gates are burnt with fire.

Come. And let us build up the wall. Of Jerusalem. That we be no more. A reproach. Then I told them. The hand of my God. Which was good upon me.

As also the king's words. That he had spoken unto me. And then it goes on. The last part of chapter 2. Verse 18. And they said. Let us rise up.

[15:25] And build. So they strengthened their hands. For this good work. The motivation that Nehemiah had. Was contagious. Now again.

We see. That when you do something for God. Expect to face critics. On the scene again. From verse 19 of chapter 2. Sam the lamp. Tobiah. Geshem.

Were there they heard it. They laughed us to scorn. They despised us. What is this thing that you do? What are you doing? What a joke. You don't have a hope. That's the Andrew Craig version. Chapter 2. Verse 20. Then answered on him. And 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 faced off the critics.

[16:19] He faced the challenge. He faced them down. The resistance. And overcame them. Friends. You too. As builders for God. Can surely expect. Opposition to come.

The enemy will seek to hinder you. And dog your steps. Who has hindered you? You reign so well. You can expect hindrances. You can expect. Opposition.

The enemy. Always has this goal. Of hindering God's work. The question is. What will you do.

When criticism comes. What will you do. When opposition comes.

Will you stand fast. With courage. With tenacity. Or will you lose motivation. Friends. I urge you. As God's people. Keep on.

Keeping on. Sadly. Not everyone. Has that motivation. Friends. We all need to be stirred up. And consider. What's my motivation level.

[17:13] We move on. Chapter three. Chapter three. As someone has said. Here is not just a list of names. But this is a record. Of action. A record of action. Now here is a fellow.

Who shall be nameless. Who still occasionally shows up in our church. He doesn't show up too often. Mind you. But we are talking about action. Action. Here is a picture of someone.

Who doesn't quite get the message. About action. You know. Faith without works. Is dead.

Someone who doesn't quite get the message. They are enjoying their Sabbath rest. But they are not doing the other six days.

That you are supposed to do. Of course. It is not like anyone in this church. Is it? None. Nehemiah had a bias to action. Nehemiah assigned work. To different people.

In different roles. In family units. And the work began. The work began. In earnest. They worked together. As the body of Christ. As a picture of that. It is a joint effort.

[18:11] People. The building of the kingdom. Is a joint effort. We build us together with God. Well. In 1 Thessalonians 5.11. It tells how. Edify one another. Build up one another.

That is the building program. We are about there right now. Here and now. And as we fellowship. Everyone had a part to play. Everyone had. An assigned task. And kept on. Till I finished the work. But there was an exception. As we see here. There was some exceptions to that. What a shame. If we were to follow their example. The example. Of the nobles. Of the Techoites. In chapter 3. Verse 5. There is a number of people. Labouring. And then it says. Next unto them. The Techoites repaired. But their nobles. Put not their necks. To the work. Of their Lord. Some people don't put their necks into it. They've got a token. Glib kind of. We kind of stand.

[19:07] And when it comes down to it. They don't put their necks into the work. Of their Lord. I hope you're not in their number. But rather be amongst those. Who wholeheartedly.

Want to work. For God. Like Paul puts it. In Colossians 3. 23. He says. Whatsoever you do. Do it. Heartily. Heartily. As to the Lord.

And not unto man. There should be. No half measures. In the kingdom of God. Let's join Nehemiah's band. And have no half measures. Let's rise up. And build.

As they did. We move on. Chapter 4. We see. Yet more. Opposition. It's a common theme. Through Nehemiah's book. Nehemiah met more opposition. In chapter 4.

Again. The question for you. For me. When the going gets tough. Will the tough get going? Or will we cave in? Will we crumble? Or will we dig ever deeper? And fight on.

[20:03] Ever stronger. In chapter 4. Verse 1. It says. Sanbalat heard this. And he was wroth. He was angry. And he took great indignation. And mocked the Jews.

He got really stropky. That's the Aussie version. He got really wroth. He got wroth. And he got indignant. And he mocked the Jews. And he said. Verse 2.

These feeble Jews. Will they revive the stones. Out of the heaps of rubbish. Which are burnt. He scorned.

And mocked. And laughed them. To scorn. God's work again. Was confronted. With naysayers. And opposition. People are going to attack you. When you stand for God.

People are going to attack you. They're going to bite and devour you. Try to. Will you stand for God. Or will you crumble. With the naysayers.

[21:00] Will you stand in faith. In your walk with God. No matter what. We have strength and courage. We need courage in these days. Brothers and sisters. And we need to lock in together.

And march together. Nehemiah showed strength and courage. He held the people together. He encouraged them with his own determination. And he armed them too. With a spear in one hand. And a trowel in the other. And they got about the work. Friends. There's a time to fight back. There's a time to arm yourself. To stand and be strong. To be firm. Tobiah 3 of chapter 4 says.

Even that which they build. If a fox go on it. It's going to break down their stone wall. They thought this stone wall was so flimsy. That a fox is going to make it fall over. These discouragers wanted him to the work.

And the builders really realistically. They were pretty weak. They were fairly scant in resources. They were surrounded by enemies. But they prayed. They prayed.

[22:00] They prayed through. And they held fast. Now one of the critical things for you as a builder for God. Is your thinking. It's your mind. The enemy will battle the builders in their mind.

As he tried to bring discouragement. And disappointment. As he tried to sow discord. As he tried to bring discouragement to their minds. And the Bible is replete with many mentions.

To the mind. To your mind. It talks of minds being blinded. Minds being corrupted. Defiled. Shaken. Weary. The Word tells us much about the mind.

So friends. It's important that our thinking is right. That our mindset is steadfast to battle through the tough times. 1 Peter 1.13. Peter says gird up the lines of your mind.

There's a sense where you've got to hang it all together. Hang tight. And get your thoughts in order. And if you want to be a builder for God. We're called to set our minds in order.

[22:55] To set our minds steadfast. For the work God has called us to. In chapter 4 verse 6. What did the people do? They had a mind to work. It says for the people had a mind to work.

Now brothers and sisters. Men and women of God. As builders for God. Builders for the kingdom of God. It's important that your mind is set on the things of God.

Not on the things on this earth. But the things above. The people had a mind to work. They had a mind that was minded after the things of God. And they prayed through. Chapter 4 verse 9.

It says they made our prayer unto God. Set a watch against them. Day and night. Because of them. This was a 24 hour prayer meeting. Whoa. Imagine that.

Not one hour every week. But 24 hours every day. Now that's pretty strong isn't it? They had opposition. From without. And from within. Discouragement was within too.

[23:59] Chapter 4 verse 10. Some of the burden bearers. They were saying. Our strength is decayed. There is much rubbish. We are not able to build the wall. That's chapter 4. Verse 10.

The discouragement started to get within the camp. It started to get embedded within the people of God. And this can happen without our own ranks.

We can get discouraged. You get beaten and bashed and pummeled and thumped and attacked enough. It starts to affect you. You start to get discouraged.

And that's what happened in Judah. The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed. We're not able. There's much rubbish. We can get disappointed. We're only human. Every one of us.

Especially this one here. We're all human. And friends. We've all got to watch out for disappointment. And have that mind to work. Keep that mind steadfast. Don't be swayed. Because the enemy knows it's about winning the battle in your mind.

[24:56] When you get overcome with doubt and despair and discouraging things. There was much discouragement. There was much rubbish. But Nehemiah refused to be sidetracked. It just made him ever stronger.

That's how it should affect you and me, brothers and sisters. When we face such things. Another line of attack, as well as the battle for the mind, is the fight for the families.

The fight on the home front. The battle that we are in is a fight for families. And I thank God we've got godly families here today. People who care about truth. They bring their children to church to hear the word of God.

The battle we are in is a fight for families today. And another truth about being a builder for God that we can learn from the book of Nehemiah is that the families laboured together. They built sections of the wall around their own homes.

And we need to watch over our families, brothers and sisters. Our families are under attack. The enemy will launch his attack at your families, at your children. Friends, the people laboured in family units near their own homes.

[25:59] We need likewise to watch over our families. Watch over our godly families. Watch over our relationships in the home. The devil will launch his attacks there. It's a weak point sometimes.

And Nehemiah armed the people so that the families laboured together. And the families were armed together. And the families built together. Chapter 4 verse 13 we see how the families were armed with swords, with spears, with bows.

And Nehemiah reminded them of the greatness of God. And it says that Nehemiah continued to seek the Lord. When opposition came, he sought the Lord. And he encouraged the people too.

In verse 14 of chapter 4. Be not ye afraid of them. Remember the Lord, which is great and terrible. And fight for your brethren. Fight for your sons. Fight for your daughters.

Fight for your wives. Fight for your houses. Fight for your homes, brothers and sisters. Fight for your families. Everything is at stake today. As we see the enemy's attack is being launched against us.

[26:59] As a constant bombardment of secular humanism through the airwaves. And you are under attack. Your families are under attack. You and your family unit. Your home is under attack.

So prepare your families for the battle. Life can be a fight. It can be a fight. We're not making light of it today. And some of you are going through the thickest of fights right now. You're in the thickest of the battle right now.

And God knows that. There's a battle on. And it's going to be long and tough and hard. And there's going to be some casualties. But keep on fighting. Keep on fighting, sister. Keep on fighting, brother.

As we battle the enemy, even on the home front. As even our own families are under attack. Let's be fully armed and watchful as Nehemiah's band. And know that God is for us.

We can defend our families. We can have that spiritual refuge that is a godly home. And we can build up the spiritual walls of protection around about.

[27:57] And know the Christian foundations on which our families are built. And not fall to neglect and carelessness. So it came to pass in 415, chapter 415, that it came to pass the enemy's herd and God had brought their counsel to nothing.

And we return to the wall, everyone, to his word. Keep going back to the wall, brother. Keep going back to the wall, sister.

When the enemy attacks, get another brick and get on with it. Amen. That's what we need to do. Throughout the book of Nehemiah, we see battle after battle, but victory after victory.

Thank God victory is yours. The victory, even your faith. Chapter 4, verse 20, the message was, Our God shall fight for us. Friends, the book of Nehemiah, it's not only a building manual, it's a battle manual.

It tells you not only how to be a builder for God, but an overcomer for God. It shows you how to get the victory. In verses 16 through 17 of chapter 4, it says that Nehemiah organised the building as including a watching for the enemy, always having a weapon at hand in case they needed it.

[29:13] What about you and me? Do you think about the spiritual armour? Did you stop to put it on this morning when you got out of bed and you looked in the mirror? I know I looked at my hair and how nice it looked, and I put on the best tocks I could find.

Did I put on the armour? That's what matters. Did you put on the armour, brother? The spiritual armour, the whole armour of God. That's what matters. Put it on, sister. Put it on, that armour of God, brother.

And always have that weapon at hand. So when we take this sustained, relentless attack that we are under in a way that defeats us or makes us ever stronger, ever more faithful, that the faith that we have is stronger and more glowing as gold in a fire.

Will you soldier on or will you give up fighting? The people trusted God. They trusted God for the victory. That's where the victory came. Nehemiah rallied the troops and urged them in faith.

What about you today? Have you got the victory? Maybe you're feeling like it's yet to come. Our God shall fight for us. Your God shall fight for you.

[30:24] How do we get the victory? It's in that. As they were battling and building, as they were building and battling, as they were praying and working, working and praying, they knew that the answer, the solution, the all-conquering fact was, our God shall fight for us.

And it's the same truth for you today. When you're feeling like the onslaught and the relentless attacks are against you, our God shall fight for us. That's the truth.

If we are to be a builder for God, we've got to be willing to do the hard yards. The hard yards. It's not going to be some picnic.

The hard yards. We've got to go the distance, people of God. The people of God. I urge you today, when opposition and difficulties come across your path, go the distance.

Go the hard yards. As we read in chapter 4, verse 21, So we laboured in the work, and half of them held the spears, from the rising of the morning, till the stars appeared. It was a full-time effort.

[31:30] While there was a spark of daylight, they were out and about, the things of God. So we laboured in the work. It was long and hard. They gave their all, scarcely stopping for a smoko, if you like.

Scarcely stopping for a break. You know, there was that intent. There was that persistence about their work. And Nehemiah showed, by his own example, his determination to persevere, and

encouraged the people to persevere, and cooperate together.

We can learn from that, from Nehemiah's perseverance and courage. Because when the rubber hits the road, people, that's when we've got to realise that our strength is in God.

It's in Him, as we rely upon Him. If you're going to be a builder for God, a builder for God, you've got to need to go the distance and hang hard onto God. Hang hard onto Him to do those hard yards. And it will be worth it all when you graduate with honours, with a distinction from the school of hard knocks. It's going to be worth it all, brother. When you see His face, it's going to be worth it then, sister.

[32:40] When you graduate from the school of hard knocks, that's what life can be like sometimes. Don't shy away when the battle is hard, when the pummeling gets tougher, when you're feeling beaten and battered.

Hang tough and battle on. Don't shy away from the hard yards. In chapter 5, we see Nehemiah again. More and more opposition, more and more trouble came Nehemiah's way.

In this time, it was in the form of disunity and discontent within the ranks. At the heart of it was sin. Sin. Sin separates us from God. Sin separates us and divides and harms and hurts our fellowship. Discontentment. It makes us falter in our faith, in our steadfastness. Disunity is sin. And Nehemiah addressed this as he confronted it.

He confronted the troublemakers and he sought to bring justice and peace. In verse 14, and he set the example in verse 14, as a leader of the people, he didn't abuse his office.

[33:46] He laboured 12 years, it says, he led the people without taking the governor's salary or entitlement. He didn't take what he was entitled to. He showed by his own personal example how to live, how to show love, how to show personal generosity.

And in verse 17, it says, 150 people ate at his own table. That's the generosity of the man. That's the big-heartedness of Nehemiah.

And his love overcame the conflict and brought a unity when disunity threatened. At the heart of it is sin. And sin calls for rebuke and repentance in our own lives.

Sin will separate us from God and it will hinder the work of building. Let's recognise it and overcome it. Our hope is in God as we trust him and make our peace with God and come to his terms of surrender.

We'll go on to chapter 6. We're getting there now. Chapter 6, we read of a further conspiracy against Nehemiah. This time, it took another form. It wasn't a battle in the mind or a battle in the families.

[34:56] It wasn't a battle in terms of a discord or disunity, but it came in the form of a compromise. The enemies of Nehemiah came to him and they said, let's have a little talk, Nehemiah.

Let's have a little sweet talk. Come, let us meet together. It's a bit like the modern day ecumenical movement. You know, we're all one big happy family. And it says in chapter 6, verse 1, Sanballat, Tobiah, Geshem were there, the rest of our enemies.

They heard that I had built the wall and there was no bridge left therein, but we hadn't quite set up the doors. Verse 2, it says, Geshem and Sanballat sent to me and said, come, let us meet together.

Come, let us meet together. It sounded quite innocent, quite a nice thing. Maybe they threw on a lunch or a dinner. I don't know. Maybe there was some special celebration.

This was a special occasion. Let's have a big gospel rock concert together or let's hear the latest new fan evangelist that's the latest fan.

[35:56] You know, come, let us build together. Come, let us meet together was their marketing slogan, if you like. Sanballat and Geshem and the purpose-driven church had this new alternative, catchy marketing slogan, let us meet together.

Nehemiah's slogan was different. Come and let us build the wall. That was Nehemiah's slogan.

Come and let us build the wall. It wasn't come, let us meet together.

Nehemiah's enemies wanted him to chill out. Come on, Nehemiah, no need to get so fanatical.

Don't be so narrow-minded, Nehemiah. We can all get on together.

Let's live in harmony. Come on, Nehemiah, let's have a little bit of dialogue here. Let's have a nice little ecumenical meeting. Doctrine doesn't matter. There's a bit of that happening today, isn't there? On the church scene. Let's all get together. Let's work out a compromise. But really, it was a crafty ploy to detour Nehemiah from the gospel work.

[37:03] Again, Nehemiah would not be sidetracked. Friends, the church is under attack. The gospel is under attack. And we're seeing these smoke screens come along where people just think, just blend in, take the easy path.

Just go easy on the hard preaching. Go easy on the hard truths. Let's just be wishy-washy like everybody else. Let's just keep it warm and fluffy and entertaining and relevant.

Let's not worry about preaching sound doctrine. There's many voices like that today. Friends, there is. How did Nehemiah respond? Come and let us meet together.

Chapter 6, verse 3, he says, I am doing a great work so that I cannot come down. Why should the work cease? Will I leave it and come down to you? They tried time and time again but Nehemiah would not be moved.

The work was too great. Why? Because it was the work of God. If we're doing the work of God, there's no question for some compromise about it.

[38:12] It's too great. It's too important. It's too precious to try to rough around the edges or try to make it more palatable for people to swallow. When you're truly a builder for God, you'll stand fast.

You're doing something too great. The gospel truth is too great. Bible doctrine is too precious to deviate. Too important to cave in to compromise.

Again, he went to prayer. Chapter 6, verse 9. Now therefore, O God, strengthen my hands. He sensed his weakness. He sensed his inadequacy. He sensed his utter reliance and dependency upon God.

O God, strengthen my hands. The opposition continued in verse 10. There was a plot against his very life. In chapter 6, verse 10. A close friend, a supposed prophet, and Nehemiah perceived it and would not be deterred.

And finally, at long last, we see the work completed. Despite all of that, despite all the contradictory forces, despite all the antagonistic forces, the enemy arrayed against him, the work was completed.

[39:24] And friends, brothers and sisters, you know, I love that scripture that he that has begun a good work in you, he that has begun a good work in you, he will complete it.

He will finish it. He will see you through. He will complete that which he has started in your life. And thank God we see the work completed. And there was great cause for rejoicing and praise and glory to God.

The people gave glory to God. They perceived that this work was wrought of our God. And this was the enemy saying that. This is chapter 6, verse 16. Verse 15, the war was finished.

Verse 16, the enemy said, this work was wrought of our God. Look at it in this way. The work was wrought of God. It was a divine work, but it was the people who had a mind to work.

We're workers together with God, aren't we? Amen? Brother, sister, you are a worker together with God. It's wrought of God, but the people had a mind to work.

[40:26] He engages human beings like you and me to bring through and to overcome, to have unity and commitment and perseverance no matter what, to bring it to pass.

The people had to give up on doing their own things and not give up when the going got hard, to continue in the work of God and to see it through with His power. What about you today?

Friends, question, what about you today? What of you? Are you a builder for God? Will you be one who will persevere or will you be a quitter? Too easily a quitter.

Will you be a builder for God? In this life that you've got to live, it's only one life to soon be passed. Only what's done for Christ will last. Use your days wisely.

Teach us to number our days, Lord, that we may apply our hearts to wisdom. Friends, you've got one life. Be a builder for God. Be built up in your faith. Build others up in their faith.

[41:24] Build the walls. There's a call here today. It's for you to persevere, to not quit, to be a builder for God. Let's just quickly recap

as we go back through the book real quick.

I know this has been a bit long today. Nehemiah's lessons for us how to be a builder for God. We are all ourselves a work in progress.

Think of it, brother, sister, each one of you are a bit like this little child. You're a work in progress. We've got some groaning to do. Every one of us, especially this one right here. We're a work in progress.

God hasn't finished with us yet. Every one of us, every one of you are building a life. You are the raw materials and you can make your life count.

You can have great dependability like Nehemiah had. When crisis strikes, what do you do? The first response is to have you been listening? When crisis strikes, what's the first thing you do?

[42:24] Pray. Pray. Pray. Pray. Pray. When you face a challenge, respond in courage, in faith and make sure it's a God-wrought work.

That's critical, isn't it? Not a self-generated one, but a God-wrought work. Let's have that same heart, that same motivation.

Let's recognise when critics and opposition comes, it's par for the course, it's normal. That's the normal Christian life. And he won the battle, he battled through in his thinking and he encouraged the people as we encourage you to fight for your families.

And he won the victory through thick and thin, through the hard yards. He did not shy away. And he encountered sin within the camp and without.

And he battled on. And the ultimate result was what? Glory to God. Glory to God. Glory be to God. The work is done. What of your life? Friends, I urge you, this is your question to answer today.

[43:32] What of your life? Will you be a builder? Will you be a builder? The devil is still in the demolition business. He wants to demolish your faith.

He wants to damage and destroy and cast down and cause shipwreck. The devil is in the demolition business. God is in the building business. He's in the people building business. He's in the faith building business. And you can have that same heart and motivation that Nehemiah had. As your work is still in progress, you're still under construction, you can be that builder for God.

Take heart this morning. Be like Nehemiah. Be a builder for your families. Be a builder of your faith. Be a builder of the fellowship. Be a builder and build up one another in your most holy faith.

Face those criticisms, those disappointments. Don't let it set you back, but make you ever pressing forward. And you can no tune that in it all.

[44:33] And no matter what, a bit like Habakkuk when everything was going wrong, he said, the joy of the Lord is my strength. That's what Nehemiah said. The joy of the Lord is your strength.

Now we have to leave the book of Nehemiah here. This is only half the story. This message is to be continued. Now I promise you it won't be as long as this message, but if you want to hear the rest of the story, come tonight.

Hallelujah. Let us pray. Let us pray.