

Wall of Protection

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[0 : 0 0] Good morning. My on? Check, okay. You know, often my son will, when I'm preaching, as soon as I come down, he says, Dad, can I hold your hand? He's not doing it as a comfort to me.

He's kind of laughing at me, saying, you're nervous up there, because every time I come down my hands are cold and I can feel it already, so it's just part of it, I guess. Just a brief update. I don't have a lot of report this morning, but I want to share a few things.

At the end of this month, we'll mark 17 years for us in high level with the First Nations ministry, and sometimes we wonder, what's the point? Has anything come out of it? Will anything come out of it? Will anything be lasting?

We don't know. Right now, we're going through some changes. We've gone through changes before, so just pray for wisdom in that.

And it's always easy, and it seems like there's a lot more to report if you want to focus on the negative. I don't know why that is, but there's a bad echo. I don't know if you can do something with that.

[1 : 1 8] Sounds a little, yeah, that's better. There's a lot of negative stuff happening all over the world, right? And it's so easy to focus on those things. But this morning, I just want to share a few that I see as very positive things.

A huge part of our ministry is counseling. This morning, we heard of one gentleman who's committed himself into a detox or a treatment center.

Very exciting, very encouraging to see that, because it's something that we deal with all the time. A huge part of our ministry is counseling addictions and trying to get them into a treatment program and those kind of things.

And some years ago, I was preaching in La Crete, and the church there was in charge of prison ministry. And so, the guy doing the opening, he encouraged people to get involved. He encouraged them, let's all go to prison and do it.

And I came up and I said, man, we preach very different messages. So, back home, I always try to encourage my people to stay out of prison instead of encouraging to go to prison.

[2 : 2 1] But that's been a, that's reality. That's been a huge part of our ministry is counseling people that are very hurt, very broken, in many different ways. Just this morning, well, last night, I got a phone call that there was a lady in the hospital in palliative care, not doing good, but I was not able to come.

It was late last night. And this morning, I was almost up to the church here, I got a phone call that she had passed away. She was very opposed to the gospel.

I've witnessed to her many times, she was very opposed to the gospel. Every single time, she'd get very upset. But the beautiful thing is, I don't know where she is, I don't know if she changed her mind, but it was her nephew who called me, who's a believer, who's been a part of our Bible study for many years.

And he was there, he was at her bedside, he was able to share the gospel. And I think probably the first time that she heard the gospel from him, how she responded, I don't know, I'm looking forward to meeting with the family.

That sounds bad, I'm looking forward to meeting, but I'm looking forward to meeting with the family when I get back home. But he was able to sit there with her and share the gospel with her one last time. She was clear in her mind.

[3 : 38] So we're just praying that, hoping that she decided not to reject India longer and that she decided to receive Christ.

A number of years ago already, our former chief, he's no longer there, we've had a few chiefs after that already, but our former chief was a professing believer. And we had a really good relationship with him and one day he would call me, invite me over for coffee, which wasn't that unusual.

We'd meet for coffee quite regularly. And I've probably shared this story before, but we sat down and he said, Abe, how are you doing? And I gave the typical answer, good.

And he's like, really? So you've been with us for a long time and we don't see a lot of people being converted. How are you doing? And I said, well, if we're being that honest, sometimes it's very discouraging, frustrating.

And he looked at me, he said, Abe, you will probably not live long enough to see our communities being converted. So don't look at the community.

[4 : 50] Look at one heart at a time and then keep going. Keep going. And he paused for a little bit and we've taken in four foster children as most of you have probably been aware of.

And our oldest two have already moved out. They're 20 and 21 years old. But he said, he looked at me and said, Abe, you have four of our children living in your home.

Maybe it'll be one of them that will come back and teach our people. Maybe it'll be one of them that will reach our people for the Lord. Maybe that will happen.

At the end of June, our son and I plan to go to a youth conference, native youth conference in Kentucky.

I think it's in Kentucky, Illinois. They've changed it around a few times, but it's in Illinois. I went to this conference in 2007 when I first started the ministry. It's an amazing ministry geared specifically to First Nations people.

[5 : 57] And our son, we've gone to different youth conferences, but he wants to go to this one this time. And he might stay there, which makes me a little emotional, but it's very exciting.

This program, they offer what they call the Summer of Hope. They travel for the rest of the summer. They will travel from one reserve to another, each place there for three days.

And I'll ask you to pray for this. He hasn't been accepted yet, but they haven't chosen the team yet either. So what they do is they travel from reserve to reserve, each community there for three days, and they do ministry.

They reach out to their people. And they do that for the rest of the summer. And so he has sent his application for that. He's applied to be on that team to share the gospel with First Nations in the U.S.

But then they also have a one-year program. After that is done, they go back and they just built a brand new training center. And they actually went out there this winter to check it out and to see their teaching and their training, what they do.

[7 : 04] It's not the typical Bible school that we normally see. It's more of a hands-on discipleship program that they do for these young people that want to reach their own people. So it's a one-year program where they will be very hands-on.

They'll be in class teaching, learning the scriptures, and then they'll be out in one of the communities somewhere practicing what they've learned and they'll be back in class. So in and out, a very hands-on, very practical teaching and training for people to reach out to their own people.

He hasn't quite committed yet to that. He wants to, but it is a long way from home and I feel very positive that once we get there and he sees everything and I think he will be convinced that this is really what he needs to do.

But that's something I'd ask you to pray for. Pray for my son that he would have the strength and the courage to do that and who knows, maybe it will be him that will come back and teach his people.

So yeah, that's a few of the positive things and there's a lot of other things I could share but I'll leave those for another time. I'll just ask you to pray for myself, pray for my son, pray for wisdom as we, some decisions that we need to make as well and pray for strength for him.

[8 : 32] This morning I want to look at not really James 4-7, I know that's the verse that was read, but I want to look at a story that I think is an illustration or an example of what James 4-7 looks like being lived out.

I want to look at Nehemiah. James 4-7 said, and I hear many people quote this verse, resist the devil and he will flee from you. But that is only a very small part of the verse.

The hard part is submit yourself to the Lord. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. So this morning I want to look at Nehemiah and we're looking at the kind of speeding through the first six chapters of Nehemiah.

This comes out of our group Bible study that we've been doing in high level with our group there. A series that I've been working on. So I kind of feel like I'm cheating you guys because you only get the introduction to the series.

We're going to look at this wall that Nehemiah is building and what's the reason for a wall? Why did they build the wall? I mean, they built the wall around Jerusalem, but what was the point of the wall?

[9 : 46] Anybody? Protection. It was really the only source or the greatest source or the main source of protection that they had from their enemy was the wall that they built around the city, right?

So we want to look at that. But before we do that, I want to look at the historical setting and the character of Nehemiah before we look at the wall. I don't think, as we will see, I don't think God gave us the book of Nehemiah so that we could read it and say, oh, that's how we do it and then go back to Grand Prairie or Claremont or Sexsmith or wherever we're living and build a wall around our city.

I don't think that was God's intention when he wrote, had the book of Nehemiah written. But I think, and I believe, that the wall that we're actually building is a wall around ourselves.

I mean, we often hear, we pray this and I've prayed this, we hear people praying for God to build a wall or a hedge of protection around us or around certain people. We do that, right?

Is it biblical? What is that wall of protection? And I am convinced that a huge part of that wall of protection around us is something that we have to build.

[11 : 04] It doesn't happen magically. It's something that we have to build and we see that in Nehemiah but we'll be looking into that a little more. But a little bit of the historical background, the setting for the book of Nehemiah.

For many years, God had warned his people, if you stray from me, if you do not return to me, you will be taken captives, you will be taken out of your land.

Yes, you're in the promised land but you'll be taken out of it. If you do not turn back to the Lord, you will be taken out. I mean, that was a promise that was given many times over. The prophets kept telling that and the people refused to listen.

So, one day, around 605 BC, the Babylonians came and they attacked Judah. And they didn't take all of Judah captive, but at first, Judah surrendered to the Babylonian powers.

Basically, they became a province of Babylon. They were now under the Babylonian authority and as long as they would do everything the Babylonian government said you do, then they were pretty good.

[12 : 11] Well, Jehoiakim, who was the king at the time, he did pretty good for a little while but it didn't take very long and he rebelled against the Nebuchadnezzar, against the Babylonian king.

And as a result, Nebuchadnezzar came and he took some captives. Again, he didn't take everybody. He took the elite.

He took the top ranking officials. He took the young people, the college, we would say maybe the college and the university students, all the brightest, the ones that had the most potential, he took those.

And we find that story in 1 Kings 23 and 24 and also in Daniel 1. And we probably know the story of Daniel and his friends.

Well, Daniel was one of those people that got taken on the first round. And then Nebuchadnezzar left again and Jehoiachin was governor and he managed to reign for a few months under the Babylonian empire.

[13 : 13] And then he was also taken away in the second attack by Nebuchadnezzar along with the middle class. So first Nebuchadnezzar came and he took the elite, he took the high-ranking officials and when that didn't work, people still rebelled against him.

Then he took the middle class. He took all the working, the blue-collar guys. We're going to shut you down one way or the other. We're going to get you. And again, a few people, they still kept going.

Zedekiah became king in the 558. He managed to reign for about 11 years and he rebelled and he rebelled as well. And the third wave of came where they came and took the rest of Judah where it took all the rest of them into captivity into Babylon.

So that was kind of the background. Nebuchadnezzar, in his arrogance, he strolled around in his kingdom and bragging about, man, look at this amazing thing that I've done. I've built this massive kingdom.

I've basically, I'm king over the whole world, known world pretty much. And he was bragging about it. He said, man, I'm really somebody. And God, we find this story in Daniel chapter 4. And then God humiliated Nebuchadnezzar.

[14 : 25] He went crazy. I don't know what his disease was. I'm sure doctors would have some kind of a diagnosis for him. I don't know what they would diagnose him with, but he was crazy.

He was crawling around on the ground and eating grass like an ox. And he had long hair growing everywhere. And he was just crazy. And thankfully, Nebuchadnezzar repented.

And he turned to the Lord. But in 562, he died. Eventually, his son became king. His son, Darius.

Sorry, Belshazzar was the son of Nebuchadnezzar. In 556, and we probably know this story where Belshazzar, he's throwing this huge party. And all of a sudden, in the middle of the party, there's this hand writing on the wall.

And everybody's scared and see what's going on. And they got somebody to come and interpret that. That was Belshazzar, Nebuchadnezzar's son. And that night, the Medes and the Persians came and they took over Babylon.

[15 : 30] So they lost their rule. And now Darius is the king of the Medes. Darius was the king when Daniel and his friends were thrown into the lion's den.

Or Daniel, he was thrown into the lion's den and Darius was the king. So that is kind of the background. That's what happened politically. But then, there's also three phases of the return.

In 538, led by Zerubbabel, the first wave was less than 50,000 people. They returned and they began to work on the temple. So they were allowed, finally, they were released from Babylon.

They were allowed to go back home. And they started rebuilding the temple because when Nebuchadnezzar came, he destroyed everything. He destroyed everything that meant anything to the Jewish people. The temple was totally destroyed.

The walls, the gates, everything was tore down. Everything was burnt down. And now they were allowed to go back, a few of them. Not everybody could go back, but a few went. And then about 80 years later, about 458 B.C., led by Ezra, the second wave was allowed to return.

[16 : 43] And this was more of the religious or the legal, like the priests and the Levites and those that went back. And they started teaching the law again.

This was, we find this in Ezra 7-10. And then another 13 years later, this is 93 years after the initial return, this is where we pick up Nehemiah.

So they were taken captives. Some went back. 83 years later, a few more went back. And 13 years later, the rest of them could go back. Well, Nehemiah, he is still in Babylon.

He's still working for the government. And that's where we pick up Nehemiah chapter 1. I'm just going to read a few verses there. It says, These are the memoirs of Nehemiah, son of Hakaliah.

In the autumn of the month of Keslev, in the 20th year of King Artaxerxes' reign, I was in the fortress of Susa. Hanani, one of my brothers, came to visit me and some other men who had just arrived from Judah.

[17 : 59] I asked them about the Jews who had returned from the captivity and how things are going in Jerusalem. They said to me, Things are not going well for those who return to the province of Judah.

They are in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem has been torn down and the gates have been destroyed by fire. Now if we read this, if we only read this, if we only pick up the story here, it sounds like this is something new.

It's something that just happened. It's like, man, somebody came and attacked Jerusalem and somebody tore down all the gates. It's like, what happened? But the background to that, this happened years ago. They had been taken into captivity and 93 years ago, the first people were already allowed to go back home.

So these walls had been torn down for a couple hundred years probably. A long time ago that this happened. But if we just read it in Nehemiah, it sounds like this is a brand new thing. But it's interesting.

I find it interesting. Nehemiah's response is that when I heard this, I sat down and wept. In fact, for days, I mourned and fasted and prayed to the God of heaven.

[19 : 09] for days, why did it hit Nehemiah so hard? What was the big deal?

I mean, these walls had been torn down for years. Why did it all of a sudden hit Nehemiah so hard that he would like weep? Did he care about the walls so much or did he not know about this before?

So what is, we're talking about walls. What is the wall of protection? We're going to come back to Nehemiah's wall here in a little bit.

But in Job chapter 1 verse 10 is Satan talking to God about Job and said, you have always put a wall of protection around him and his home and his property. You have made him prosper in everything he does.

Look how rich he is. You are like a wall protecting not only him but his entire family and all his property. You make him successful in whatever he does and his flocks and herds are everywhere.

[20 : 14] That's from the contemporary English version. It says, you have always put a wall of protection around him. In Psalm 34 verse 7 it says, for the angel of the Lord is a guard.

He surrounds and defends all who fear him. Psalm 27 verse 5 says, for he will conceal me there when trouble comes. He will hide me in his sanctuary. He will place me out of reach on a high rock.

And from verses like that is where we get this wall of protection. We probably forgot to put a wall of protection around us. But what is it? Now these Jewish people they had been taken captive by their enemy.

Now they had gained freedom. they were back home in their land although they were still under the Persian rule but they were able to go back home and somewhat be their own people.

They now know their enemies so how can they be sure that they would not be taken captive again? I think to better understand how Nehemiah must have felt we need to understand the fact that it was 93 years since the first party returned to Jerusalem and the walls were still in ruin.

[21 : 37] He wasn't saddened so much that the walls were broken down but that they were still broken down. The people had been back home they'd been living there for 93 years and nothing had been done.

Nobody did anything. Hananiah came to Nehemiah and said how are things going back home? He says it's terrible. It's terrible. All our walls are broken down.

We have no gates. We have no protection. We're open to the enemy. But what did they do about it? For 93 years they'd been there and they'd done nothing.

Sometimes I feel like that too. We have a lot of people that can tell us exactly what needs to be done but not a lot of people willing to do it.

We want to look at this this morning. And we could be hard on Hananiah and say you're just lazy and you're just scared but I don't think Hananiah was really a bad guy.

[22 : 42] We see later on in Nehemiah chapter 7 verse 2 that he was given the responsibility to govern Judah. So he couldn't have been that bad of a guy. So what happened?

In 2019 we went to visit some friends of ours missionary friends in Hungary and they used to pasture up in high level and they moved on to Hungary and we went to visit them.

I found it quite interesting. In Hungary not to knock any country but I felt very depressed. Not personally but I felt a depression in Hungary I should say.

I didn't feel depressed but I felt a depression. You'd go into Budapest the capital city and you'd look around and you'd see huge massive bullet holes from cannonballs had hit the building back in World War II.

A lot of destruction was still there. It had never been cleaned up and they didn't want to clean it up because that was part of their history and they wanted people to remember their history and that's just who we are but as a result it just seemed like there was a lot of depression and a lot of hopelessness.

[23 : 54] Just kind of blah. It's been like this for so long and yet then we crossed over to another country and crossed into Austria and it was basically the second we crossed the border everything changed.

The fields were green. The houses were painted. They were nice bright white and everything was cleaned up. You came to the city and you couldn't see a speck of garbage anywhere. It smelled nice. It was amazing.

And we wanted to go see some World War history sites in Austria and we found out very quickly that there's nothing left. Unless you know where to go, nobody's going to tell you anything because that's part of their history that they're not proud of so we've moved on from that.

We're no longer living in that. You cross back into Hungary and everything was blah. In 2012, we went to this youth conference that I just talked about.

We took a group down there and on our way back we decided to look, stop at some sites, some historic events, places. We stopped at Wounded Knee. I don't know if any of you ever been to Wounded Knee?

[24 : 59] It's a place where there's a massive massacre happened to the First Nations out there and there's a big memorial site set up for that and we decided to stop in there and look at it.

And the second we stopped and we got off the bus and we had another First Nations chaperone with us, adult, a believer. And we stopped the bus, we got out of the bus and me and him were like stepped off the bus together and it just, it hit us.

And he just looked at me and said, whoa, Abe, so you feel that. So we need to pray, we can't let anybody off the bus, we need to pray. And we did, we prayed before we let anybody off the bus. You could just feel this depression, this deep, deep sense of hopelessness and hurt and depression.

You could just, it just hit you. And we prayed and we did go up there but nobody really enjoyed it there, like nobody, like they didn't all feel it like we did.

But you could just feel the deep sense of depression and deep sense of hopelessness. It's always going to, it's always been like this and it will probably always be like this.

[26 : 06] I think that was Hananiah's case. As long as he could remember, I mean he was not that old of a guy and the first people had gone back to 93 years ago, as long as he could remember those walls had been broken.

They were broken when he was born. And as far as I can see they're always going to be broken. This looked so huge, so big that he didn't even know where to start.

I think that was the case. I mean the Bible doesn't tell us that but I think that was the case. It's always been like this, it seems so big that he didn't know where to start.

Nehemiah chapter 2 verses 1 and 2 says, when I heard this, this is Nehemiah talking, I sat down and I wept. In fact, for days I mourned, fasted, and prayed to the God of heaven.

Now it doesn't really tell us for how many days, but it says for days. And if we look at chapter 2 verse 1, and chapter 1 verse 1 it says it was in the late autumn in the month of Kestlev, which is our December, November, December kind of month.

[27 : 16] And chapter 2 verse 1 says, early in the following spring in the month of Nisan, which is April. So for about four or five months, Nehemiah fasted and he prayed about the situation.

After four or five months of praying and fasting, it said early the following spring in the month of Nisan, during the 20th year of King Artaxerxes reign, I was serving the king his wine.

I had never before appeared sad in his presence. And according to the book of Esther, to appear sad in the presence of the king could be a death sentence. Appearing sad or disheartened before the king could be enough that he could legally put you to death.

So he had never appeared sad, and it's kind of understandable. We'd force ourselves to be happy, right? So the king asked me, why are you looking so sad? You don't look sick to me.

You must be deeply troubled. Then I was terrified, but I replied, long live the king. How can I not be sad?

[28 : 29] For the city where my ancestors are buried is in ruins and the gates have been destroyed by fire. And saying this could be another death penalty.

Are you planning to go back and to resurrect something that we have destroyed, and are you trying to cause a resurrection, not resurrection, revolution against me?

Is that what you're trying to do? That could have been a death penalty right there. First he appeared sad, and now he dared say that he wanted those walls to be rebuilt. But Nehemiah had already laid the foundation for that wall.

And it was prayer. And we'll see that. We see that in the character of Nehemiah as we'll continue through here. The foundation of the wall was built long before Nehemiah hit the ground in Judah.

And it was prayer and fasting. The king could have said, to death with you, but instead in chapter 2, verse 4, so the king asked, well, how can I help you?

[29 : 43] This is a very, very unusual response for a king. And Nehemiah, what does he do? With a prayer to the God of heaven.

So earlier we were talking about what does it mean to rejoice and to worship continually. Nehemiah had developed a lifestyle of prayer.

He prayed and fasted for four to five months about the situation before he even approached the king. And now he comes before the king and he knows that he could very well be killed.

And the king already said, okay, well, how may I help you? And I'm sure Nehemiah didn't fall down and say, okay, I'm going to take a 10-minute break here. I'm going to need some time of prayer. But it says, with a prayer, he says, probably just a very quick, Lord, here we go.

It's in your hands. Just a very quick little prayer. He said, but with a prayer to the God of heaven, I replied, if it please the king, and if you are pleased with me, your servants, send me to Judah to rebuild the city where my ancestors are buried.

[30 : 53] Really? He's openly saying, he's like, God, King, I want to rebuild the walls so that I can protect our people from you. I was terrified, but he still said it.

And the king's response is, how long will you be gone? He agreed to my request. And then Nehemiah says in chapter 2, verse 7, let me have, because just allowing me to go, that's not enough.

Let me have letters granting me safe travels. So that if anybody stops me and says, no, no, no, you can't go, so that I can show them my past. No, I can have safe travels.

And so, oh, by the way, in chapter 2, verse 8, I'll need somebody to fund this project. You know how Nehemiah is just going on and on? Like, he could be killed, but yet he goes on.

Why? Because he fasted, the foundation was laid, he fasted and he prayed and he was confident in his Lord God that he would see him through. And the king granted these requests.

[32 : 15] Chapter 2, verse 8. Why? Because of the gracious hand of God was on me. Nehemiah realized that none of this is any of my doing.

Everything that is happening here, just the simple fact that the king didn't kill me and that he allows me to go, he writes letters so that I can have safety, and he decides to fund the project.

Like, it just gets better and better. And he realized that none of this has anything to do with me, but it is because of the gracious hand of God is on me. And then Nehemiah, he's just plain bragging.

Not like Nebuchadnezzar was earlier in his own thing. But he's bragging about the goodness of his God. And says, the king, I should add, had sent along army officers and horsemen to protect me.

The king sent along a security detail. Why? Because the gracious hand of God was on him.

[33 : 24] And why? Because Nehemiah laid the foundation, which was a foundation of prayer. But right from the beginning, he hasn't even started building the wall yet.

He's just making plans. He hasn't even made a plan on how he's going to do it. All he knows is it needs to be done, and he's on his way out there. But right from the start, we see that the enemy started to stand up in chapter 2, verse 10.

It just says that they were very displeased. And there's two guys, Sambalat and Tobiah. Two guys. Very displeased. And when Nehemiah finally gets to Judah, and he walks around the city and makes his first inspection to see what actually needs to happen.

It says, But then Sambalat and Tobiah and Geshem, the Arab, heard of our plan. You notice one thing. In the beginning, in chapter 2, verse 10, there was Sambalat and Tobiah. Now there's Sambalat, Tobiah, and Geshem, the Arab, heard of our plan.

They scoffed contemptuously. What are you doing? Are you rebelling against the king, they asked. And what was his response? I replied, The God of heaven will help us succeed.

[34 : 40] We, his servants, will start rebuilding this wall. He never says, I don't care what you say. The king gave me this letter, and you can go stuff that somewhere else, and I'm going to build this wall.

He said, The God of heaven will help us. Totally dependent on God. And the reconstruction begins. But Sambalat was very angry when he learned that we were rebuilding the wall.

He flew into rage and mocked the Jews, saying in front of his friends and the Samaritan army officers, What does this bunch of poor, feeble Jews think they're doing? Do they think they can build a wall in a single day just by offering a few sacrifices?

So not only are they mocking Nehemiah, they're mocking Nehemiah's God. Do you really think that you can do this, you're going to offer a few sacrifices, and you're going to worship this God, and you're just going to build this wall?

Really? He's totally making fun of Nehemiah and of Nehemiah's God. Do they actually think they can make something out of stones from a rubbish heap and charred ones at that?

[35 : 56] Tobiah, the Ammonite who was standing beside him, remarked, That stone wall would collapse if even a fox walked along the top of it. And then Nehemiah flew into rage and he tackled him and threw him down on the ground and he beat him up.

And he didn't do that. Then in verse 4, then I prayed. We're faced with opposition. Then I prayed.

Verse 7, but with Sambalat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites, and Ashadites, what is happening here? You ever notice that God is doing something good, and you have somebody who's opposed to it, but he alone can stop you.

So what do people usually do? Hey, Wayne, I need to have a little meeting with you. Do you see what John is doing over there? By the way, Jake over there, it's like, you know, I'm trying to rally together my group here because I'm going to tell you all my version and this is what's happening and this is what I, so that they will now all turn against you guys too.

That's really what's happening here. In the beginning, we had Sambalat, Tobiah, and now we have Sambalat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites, and the Ashadites, all turning against them.

[37 : 15] When they heard that the work was going on, going ahead, and that the gaps in the wall of Jerusalem were being repaired, they were furious. So they made plans to come and fight against Jerusalem and throw us into confusion.

But we prayed. The response again was we prayed. We prayed. We prayed. We prayed to our God and guarded the city day and night to protect ourselves.

Then the people in chapter 4, verse 10, the people of Judah began to complain. The workers are getting tired and there's so much trouble to be moved. We will never be able to build the wall by ourselves.

It's starting to work. All the enemies coming and rallying against them is starting to take a toll on the people. The people are starting to lose hope, lose heart.

Man, there's so much trouble. I didn't know it was going to be that much work. I don't think we can do it. This is too much. We might as well, I mean, they themselves, they tell us they're going to kill us.

[38 : 35] Meanwhile, our enemies were saying, before you know what's happening, we will swoop down on them, kill them, and end their work. The Jews who lived near the enemy came and told us again and again, they will come from all directions and attack us.

So I placed guards around the lowest parts of the wall in the exposed areas. I stationed the people to stand guard by families armed with swords, spears, and bows. Then I looked over the situation.

I called together the nobles and the rest of the people and said to them, do not be afraid. Why? Do not be afraid because I have these letters from the king back home.

No, he didn't say that. He said, do not be afraid of the enemy. Remember the Lord who is great and glorious. Remember that?

Remember the Lord? Remember what he has done? Go fight for your brothers and your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your homes.

[39 : 42] But not in your own strength. Remember the Lord who is gracious, who is great and glorious. But there was corruption within too. So when the enemies came from the outside, Nehemiah prayed continually, he says, and we prayed.

And God saw them through. When people were discouraged on the inside, he said, remember the Lord God. Don't focus on yourself. Don't focus on the enemy. Focus on the Lord God and keep going. Now we have corruption from within.

And then he says, he was very angry. In chapter 5, in verse 6, when I heard their complaints, I was very angry because this was the people from within, the people that should be standing together, the people that should be fighting together, standing against the enemy.

Now they're starting to turn against each other. And he became very angry. But you see again, they see the character of Nehemiah. I said, after thinking it over, the initial response was he was angry.

You know, sometimes when we see bad and sometimes it's evil things that are happening, our first response wants to be, it's like, we're angry and we want to attack somebody. We've got to do something because this just isn't right.

[40 : 59] But Nehemiah says, after thinking it over, after thinking it through, he calls a meeting. And he reminds in chapter 5, verse 9, it said, should we not, or should you not walk in the fear of our God in order to avoid being mocked by enemy nations?

So again, if the enemies came from the outside, he prayed. If they're discouraged from the inside, if there's corruption from the inside, he said, remember the Lord your God.

Don't get sidetracked by all these things. Focus on the Lord your God. Do what is right. And the walls were complete. In chapter 6, the walls were complete.

Everything was done except for the gates. And the enemies saw that they couldn't stop these guys. So now they switched to a different tactic. They said, man, you guys are doing an amazing work.

We should get together and talk about this. You know, see how you're doing this. And what's your strategies? And how do you have a friendly little get-together? That's really how the enemy is approaching now.

[42 : 03] Let's have a little meeting. And Nehemiah's response was, I'm engaged in a great work. He didn't say that I'm doing a great work. I'm doing an amazing job. He never takes a credit.

He never puts any credit on himself. He says, I am engaged in a great work. I'm doing the Lord's work. Not that he is doing a great job, but he's doing a great work because it's the Lord's work.

I don't have time for whatever it is that you have in mind because he knows it's a deception. And he keeps going. Four times they send this message in chapter 6. Four times.

The same message. We need to get together. We need to have a meeting. And when that doesn't work, they say, well, we're going to start. And they openly say, we're going to spread false accusations against you.

We saw this in Sunday school this morning in Acts 24. People were falsely accusing Paul, bringing him before the courts. Not because of anything Paul had done, but falsely accusing him of things.

[43 : 02] They said, we're going to do that with you. We're going to accuse you of treason. We're going to bring you before the king. We're going to bring you before the courts. And again, Nehemiah doesn't fall for it.

Nehemiah basically said, you know it's not true. I know it's not true. And he continued to work. The last final tactic that he used.

Shemaniah. One of the inside guys. He paid him. Go to Nehemiah. Get him. Tell him that you're going to be killed. And that he needs to go lock himself in the temple, by the way.

So this is very, very godly. That he needs to go lock himself up in the temple because he's going to be killed tonight. And Nehemiah says, I will not do that.

No, I won't do it. Chapter 6, verse 11. In chapter 6, verse 14, he again says, and he prayed. He wasn't going to lock himself up.

[44 : 04] He wasn't going to hide and cower away from the enemy. Instead, he turned again. He turned to the Lord. He prayed. So on October 2nd, the wall was finished.

Just 52 days after we had begun. We started with James, chapter 4, verse 7. It says, so humble yourselves before God.

Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. I think Nehemiah, the story of Nehemiah is a picture of that being lived out. The wall was complete.

Chapter 6, verse 16 says, Continually from start to finish, Nehemiah submitted himself to the Lord.

He laid the foundation, which was prayer and a dependence on the Lord. Before he even laid the first stone, before he even drew the first plans.

[45 : 11] He didn't make up his plans. Okay, God, this is what I want to do, and now I want you to bless it. He went before the Lord for four to five months, prayed and fasted. Did God show me? What do you want me to do? And God gave him the plan, and he worked with that, and he continued with that.

So I would encourage us. Earlier, the thought was shared that all of Grand Prairie was going to come to know the Lord, and we kind of laughed at it. Because we can't do it.

We can't do it. But God can. And sometimes the job looks so big. Because we can't do it. And it looks big because we can't do it.

But it's not too big for God to do it. So I would encourage us to start building our own wall for protection around us.

And it starts with prayer. And I would have to let you study your own studies on building the rest of the wall. But we find a lot of that. If we study the gates in Nehemiah chapter 3, I think we find a lot of instruction on what that wall around our lives needs to look like.

[46 : 18] But it starts with prayer and a submission to the Lord God. When we do that, we submit to him. We saw in Nehemiah, we see in James chapter 4, when we humbly submit ourselves to the Lord.

That is really the only time we can resist the devil. I don't have the strength to resist the devil. I fall every time if I do it on my own. But if we first submit to the Lord, we go in his power, we go in his strength, we go in his will.

The enemy, in the end, they were frightened and humiliated because they saw that this work was done in the power of God. May we go and do his work in the power of God.

Let's pray. Father, I thank you that there's no job too big for you. Lord, sometimes we are like Hannah and I.

We look at something and it's just so overwhelming that we do nothing. It's too big for us. We don't know where to start. But Lord, help us to follow Nehemiah's example, that we would start simply by prayer and fasting, coming before you, seeking direction, wisdom, strength, courage.

[47 : 49] And then follow with what you lay on our hearts. Follow with your plan. Lord, we know it's not easy. We know there's obstacles.

But again, may we look at Nehemiah's example, where he continually came to you, but he prayed. Help us to pray. Help us to continue to rely on you. Help us to go and do your work and your strength for your glory.

Amen.