

# Building Inspections

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- [ 0 : 0 0 ]     Good evening, brothers, sisters and friends. Same intimations as the morning. I'm going to get a few sheets, hopefully, still in the back door. There's nothing too pressing this week.
- It's the usual prayer meeting on Thursday. One thing I didn't say in the morning, which should be on the sheet, I'll say it just now. God willing, we'll have a deacon's court on Wednesday.
- A deacon's court on Wednesday at 7. So please do be in prayer. I thought as far as we come and discuss together and make decisions and try and serve the Lord as best we can in that capacity with yourselves, we're here this evening to worship the Lord.
- We can do so all in the Scottish Psalter this evening. Scottish Psalter, first of all then, Psalm 116. Scottish Psalter, Psalm 116.
- That's on page 395. Page 395. Page 395. We can sing verses 1 down to verse 6.
- [ 1 : 0 9 ]     I love the Lord because my voice and prayers he did hear. I, while I live, will call on him who bowed to me as he is. Of death, the cords and sorrows did about me compass round.
- The pains of hell took hold on me. My grief and trouble found. Psalm 116, verses 1 to 6. God's Prayer is almighty. Amen. I love the Lord because my voice and prayers himjay in the creation.
- I'm why I am the call on him to bow to me his ear.
- Of care the cause and smallness have hurt me out of sight.
- The pains of hell you hold on me I give and trust the power.
- [ 2 : 3 9 ]     Upon the name of the Lord and the bright path of sin He let the blood my soul Thevezha Samu tenga ¶¶
- Let's join together in a word of prayer. Let's pray. Lord our God, we ask once more for that sense this evening of your majesty, of your glory.
- We know that too much of that, we cannot begin to handle it. But we ask that you give us a sense, a passing sense of the glory and the majesty of you, the God we come to worship this evening.
- Help us, we ask, for a short time to lay aside not just the burdens, but also the responsibilities and concerns of this world. For a short time around your word, help us to be fed by your word, to be encouraged by it, to be built up by it.
- We confess often we come to times around your word and we leave sometimes with nothing. Sometimes the fault of the preacher, but often the fault of our own hearts.
- [ 4 : 5 0 ]     We have come not ready to listen, not ready to apply it to ourselves. We do ask you to help us to leave this place having been true listeners to the word. Not just attenders, but listeners.
- And then help our listening, not just to be dry listening, but help us in to this week seek to apply all that we've heard in the real world, day by day. We bring just now before you every day of this new week.

We give you praise that we can begin this week in the best way for us, in the best place for us, surrounded by your people. We begin this new week now today with, having begun a week of praise.

No matter what we may encounter this week, no matter what we may face this week, we know that we have a God who keeps his people, who knows his people.

As we'll read later on, as we remind ourselves and see the destruction that Nehemiah faced, we are reminded that whatever destruction, whatever downcast, whatever dismantling we perhaps will behold this week.

[ 5 : 58 ] As we see lives of our friends and families perhaps dismantled and destroyed by sin, by addiction, by other various causes. Perhaps our own lives we see a measure of dismantling and destruction for various reasons.

As we see these things, as we despair, we come once more to you and we say, Lord, we have nothing, but in you we have everything. Help us then this evening as we prayed this morning.

We prayed for our world. We prayed for those who are afflicted and those who are affected. We pray this evening more locally just for ourselves. We pray for the gospel cause in North Tulsa.

We pray as it goes out this evening and as it goes out the rest of this week that you be glorified. We pray just now for every home, every single family, every individual, every man, woman and child from the Glen to Gary, every single person.

We pray just now that in your time and in your way, everyone would come to be encouraged or to come to know you for the first time. We pray just now before you the great prayer, the prayer that is again beyond our working out, that is beyond our power.

[ 7 : 09 ] We do pray for the salvation of North Tulsa. We give you praise that salvation belongs to you. We cannot make it take place. We cannot change how it takes place.

It belongs to you. You alone bring the dead to life. You alone bring to life those who have no hope and no help. You alone change the future of those who are heading to lost eternity.

And with that, you have called us to be faithful servants. We ask you be helping us to be faithful servants publicly in this village. Our conduct around the village would show ourselves of who we are, but we are those who have been saved and kept, those who have been called out of this world by your marvelous working power into your marvelous light.

Pray for our conduct at home, as it were, behind closed doors, that those who perhaps see us and know us privately, friends and family, would also see in us the beauty of a Savior.

When people behold our lifestyles and behold our conduct, they would want to be like us. Because in us, they see something different. And in that, we then point them to you. Pray just now for the many in our village who have little to no gospel knowledge and little to no gospel interest.

[ 8 : 35 ] We pray they would not carry on in their ignorance. We pray that you would use us as salt and light. Give us, we ask, these gospel-based interactions. As we've been praying for and studying on their Thursday nights together, we would be looking out for gospel-sharing chances day by day.

Every chance we have to talk about our Savior, to share about his beauty, his wonder, his power, to encourage everyone and anyone to come and to behold that beauty and power for themselves.

Pray we would lay hold on every chance you give us to be faithful witnesses, to be ambassadors. Help us not to be static in any way, at any time, but help us to understand we've been saved out of this world for a purpose, to go forward into the plans, into the purposes you have for us.

And because we go forward in your strength, we know that your word will not fail, that we at times will feel as if we are failing, but your plan will never fail.

You will bring your people to yourself. You will bring your people home. We do then pray with that in mind. We would see many, many more faces come to worship you in this place.

[ 9 : 48 ] We would see these pews filling up week after week, month after month and year after year. We give you praise even this morning, as we saw the amount of children we had. We give you praise for that, that in this last year you have seen fit to bless us with new faces and returning faces.

Pray also for those who have come out and who have kept coming out. We pray each now, Lord, as we look forward, if it's your will, to next year, to perhaps hosting something similar again to a Back to Church Sunday, that those who did not make that move last year might make it this coming year.

Pray just now looking forward this week, we pray for our deacons' court on Wednesday. We thank you that as a congregation you have given us the great chance to have resources, resources to use for your glory.

We thank you that your people here are a kind people, a generous people. We see that reflected in the giving. We see that reflected in what we are now able to perhaps begin to do to further the gospel cause in North Tulsa.

We thank you, Lord, for the fact that this week we will gather, and that your will on Thursday, to pray together, to spend time around your word once more. Help us never to neglect or to grow tired or to make it nothing more than a ritual, the fact we can come together.

[ 11 : 05 ] As brothers and sisters, we can pray knowing we have a Father in heaven who hears us. So pray for ourselves. We pray for the ongoing gospel work across this village. We thank you that the work is not ours alone.

It is your work. We are part of it, but it is your work. We pray that whatever gospel blessings we may well see in the days and weeks and years ahead, that we would receive none of the glory from it.

You be glorified in all that you're doing. We pray just now once more for our brothers and sisters next door. Pray also, Lord, for the Christians in our village who worship elsewhere outside the village.

that together as one family, as one people, we would all seek together the greater gospel good of North Tulsa. I'm praying that impossible prayer that you'd save every single man, woman, child, every home and family, every individual.

We leave that with you. We cannot do anything else. Prepare us, we ask, as your people this evening. Prepare our hearts, then, to be servant-hearted this week. Prepare our minds to give, as it were, these articulate, these clear answers to the questions we might be asked.

[ 12 : 15 ] Prepare our hearts, make us courageous, to lay hold in every chance you give us, to not face any embarrassment in sharing the true glory and true beauty of who our Saviour is.

we ask, Lord, you would forgive. Ask, Lord, you would remove the stumbling blocks that, to our shame, we have placed in front of many. We have added over the years rules and regulations from man to the gospel cause that you have not included yourself.

We heard this morning the simple call to come and rest. All who are weary and all who are heavy laden, we ask that everyone in Tolstall would come to hear that same message, that in Jesus we find rest for their souls.

In Jesus we can come and no longer labour, no longer try and make themselves good or holy, but understand that holiness is found in Jesus and Him alone. So remember ourselves, we are mindful as we were on our sheets this morning.

We pray for the work of Tear Fund as they ask us especially to pray for their ongoing work in the Middle East. I pray just now for your church, particularly your church in the Gaza area there as they are seeing and we are hearing and seeing reports of such devastation as we are hearing of brothers and sisters in the faith who themselves are facing at this very moment destroyed families, buildings demolished as we are seeing the gospel cause attack in various ways.

[ 13 : 49 ] We pray, Lord, the ongoing strength of your people. We pray also, Lord, the ongoing strength of your people in other conflict areas in this world. We are aware of your people worshipping you just now in Ukraine.

We ask you to strengthen their hands. We also remember as always brothers and sisters separated by the border but not in faith. Brothers and sisters in Russia who themselves in many ways face a difficult situation.

Pray, Lord, for wars and the rumours of wars that we hear going on. We try and keep track of the Middle East, of parts of Africa, of Asia as we see the ongoing civil wars in areas there but we are reminded that we are not in a world that is without conflict.

We give you praise for the reasonable safety and peace we have had in our nation now for many years. We ask that we continue for our mind for that it is not guaranteed for us.

We do pray just now for government. Pray for those over us locally and nationally. Pray just now for those in the council as they make decisions that affect us locally. Give them wisdom, we ask.

[ 15 : 02 ] Pray just now for those in Holyrood and those in Westminster as they also make decisions that affect the whole nation. Lord, we ask you to be there we ask you to lead them and guide them.

We ask particularly in recent days we ask for forgiveness. We ask for your mercy towards us as a nation as we see once more the complete devaluing of human life taking place.

We see the ongoing devaluing of life from its very start as we see murder after murder as we see the decimation as we see the reality of it.

Many thousands indeed now closing down to many millions of young lives taken away. Now we see the other side a future perhaps where life in its final stage is now also worth nothing.

We give you praise that we have in your word the assurance and the evidence that life is worth the most precious of gold and silver and much more precious than that from the start right to the very end.

[ 16 : 10 ] Lord help us to be gentle help us to be careful help us to be gracious but help us also to be steadfast and to be firm as we are sure in the weeks and years ahead engage in difficult discussions and difficult conversations with both friends and family.

Lord you forgive these decisions we make as a nation. You would not visit us with the wrath that we are sure is due for us. We ask as you give us the freedom just now to share the gospel help us to make the full use of it to understand that you will bring your people to yourself.

The work is yours we have the great privilege of just being workers in that field. Look after us we ask the rest of this evening help us to focus on your word help us to go home later on in safety to begin this new week well and to do so knowing we have a saviour who keeps his people who loves his people who protects his people and who will never leave nor forsake his people in his name and for his sake alone.

Let's call these things. Amen. We can turn now to God's word. We're carrying on our series in Nehemiah. We started last week we're now in Nehemiah chapter 2 that's on page 370 of the church Bibles page 370 it's one of these books always quite hard to find it's just before Esther and Job page 370 Nehemiah chapter 2 let's hear God's word together in the month of Nisan in the 20th year of King Artaxerxes when wine was before him I took up the wine and gave it to the king now I had not been sad in his presence and the king said to me why is your face sad seeing that you're not sick this is nothing but sadness of the heart then I was very much afraid

I said to the king let the king live forever why should not my face be sad when the city the place of my father's graves lies in ruins and its gates have been destroyed by fire then the king said to me what are you requesting so I prayed to the God of heaven and I said to the king if it pleases the king and if your servant has found favor in your sight would you send me to Judah to the city of my father's graves that I may rebuild it the king said to me the queen sitting beside him how long will you be gone and when will you return so please the king just send me when I have given him a time I said to the king if it pleases the king let letters be given me to the governors of the province beyond the river that they may let me pass through till I come to Judah a letter to Asaph the keeper of the king's forest that he might give me the timber to make beams to the gates of the fortress of the temple and to the wall of the city and to the house that I shall occupy the king granted me what I asked the good hand of my god was upon me then I came to the governors of the province beyond the river and gave them the king's letters the king had sent with me officers of the army and horsemen but when

[ 19 : 45 ] Sambalath the hornite and Tobiah the Ammonite servant heard this it displeased them greatly that someone had come to seek the welfare of the people of Israel so I went to Jerusalem and was there three days when I rose in the night I and a few men with me and I told no one what my god had put into my heart to do for Jerusalem there was no animal with me but the one on which I rode I went out by night by the valley gate to the dragon spring and to the dung gate and inspected the walls of Jerusalem that were broken down and its gates that had been destroyed by fire and I went on the fountain gate and to the king's pool there was no room for the animal that was under me to pass and I went up in the night by the valley and inspected the wall I turned back and entered by the valley gate and so returned the officials did not know where I had gone or what I was doing and I had not yet told the Jews the priests the nobles the officials and the rest who are to do the work then I said to them you see the trouble we are in how

Jerusalem lies in ruins with its gates burned come let us build the wall of Jerusalem but we may no longer suffer derision and I told them of the hand of my God that had been put upon me for good and also of the words of the king that had spoken to me and they said let us rise up and build so they strengthened their hands for the good work but when Sanballath the hornite and Tobiah the Ammonite servant and Geshem the Arab heard of it they jeered at us and despised us and said what is this thing that you are doing are you rebelling against the king and then I replied to them the God of heaven will make us prosper and we his servants will arise and build but you have no portion or right or claim in Jerusalem and then give praise to God once more for his holy and his perfect word we can sing now again in the Scottish Psalter this time

Psalms 89 Scottish Psalter Psalms 89 Scottish Psalter Psalms 89 page 344 we can sing verses 1 down to verse 5 Psalms 89 verses 1 down to verse 5 God's mercies I will ever sing and with my mouth I shall by faithfulness make to be known to generations all for mercy shall be built said I forever to endure by faithfulness even in the heavens thou wilt establish sure Psalms 89 verses 1 to 5 to God's praise verse 5

Thank you.

Thank you.

[ 24 : 08 ] Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. They were in Jerusalem. They were captured. And here he is, this generation's on. And he is here, pining after his homeland. And we saw last week, a report came back to him. And the Jews in this court, they assumed that things were going well back home. But after many years now, after these hundred or so years, that the walls are now being built up again, that the city's being restored.

[ 27 : 27 ] And we saw last week that poor Nehemiah, the report was given to him. Verse 3 of chapter 1. The remnant there of Jews in the province who had survived the exile is in great trouble and shame.

The walls of Jerusalem are broken down and its gates are destroyed by fire. In other words, poor Nehemiah and the rest of the Jewish believers, they're now hearing that actually their homeland is even less ready for them to go back to. In fact, now it's just rubble and ruin.

And we left Nehemiah last week. His reaction was, he falls on his knees, he grieves and he prays. And we ended there at the end of chapter 1 with him praying.

Well, here tonight we see the answer, at least the beginnings of an answer to Nehemiah's prayer. As we go through this book together, we're trying to apply it, remember we said, to ourselves.

Our walls are not broken down of the gospel cause in North Tolstah or the gospel cause in the Western Isles. The gates are not on fire. As we said last week, the walls definitely look for us, at least, to be far less secure than they once were. The pews, the empty pews, both here and upstairs, show us the gospel cause in North Tolstah is definitely down what it was these many years ago.

[ 29 : 01 ] And rather than be distraught and downcast, as we look to the story, look to the journey of Nehemiah and the others with him. Our goal is, our desire is, rather than stay where we are and think, well, the gates are burnt down, the walls are broken, what's the point? We can learn from Nehemiah and see how do we go forward. When the cause seems low, how do we then keep on going?

So last week we saw prayer. Well, now in chapter 2, some time has passed, not long, but a few days have passed, and he is here and he's been serving the king, Purnehemiah. He's been praying, the sense is, he's been praying and mourning. He's been serving the king as best he can. But the king, King Artaxec, says he is no fool. We said last time he's a powerful king. He's captured kingdoms, captured whole nation states. He is, historically speaking, a great man. Scripturally speaking, biblically speaking, morally speaking, not a great man at all. But in terms of history, a great man, great in his power, great in his ability. And he sees his wine bearer, his cup bearer, and he sees that Purnehemiah, his face is obviously tipping him up. So much so, the king said to me, verse 2, why is your face sad, seeing you're not sick? The king is a practical man. He said, well, you aren't sick, you're still working for me. Why do you look so awful? Sad is perhaps a very polite translation there for us. Why do you look so miserable? The king says to Purnehemiah. Some of us are gifted with faces which just don't change in any situation, it feels like. Some of us can keep a straight face when we shouldn't be laughing.

Others of us keep a good face when we should look happy or sad. Others of us, we show every emotion on our faces. And it seems for Purnehemiah, he is the latter. He is showing his emotions, and no wonder.

His whole life, he's been waiting to hear good news of the city, waiting to hear the day they can all go back home again, when the cause has been built up, and now his whole life's plan, his history, it's been destroyed. We see that in a few verses time, when he describes to the king what is going on.

Does he not say to the king, how do they words? Of course my face is sad. Why, verse 3, why should not my face be sad, when the city, the place of my father's graves lies in ruins? Its gates have been destroyed by fire. As Nehemiah walks in looking sad, as the king recognizes that sadness, as the king then asks Nehemiah what's going on, look how Nehemiah feels. At the end of verse 2 there, the king asks, what's going on? Why do you look so sad? Then I was very much afraid, I said to the king.

[ 32 : 04 ] Nehemiah is a wee servant, in front of this time, one of the most powerful kings of the day, whose life, whose power, Nehemiah has no chance against. And the king could, in a second, in a word, remove Nehemiah's whole memory and whole existence from the face of the earth. So, Peter Nehemiah, the king says, why are you sad? And Nehemiah is terrified. Why wouldn't he be?

But Nehemiah girds himself for an answer. I said to the king, let the king live forever. He's trying his best, who wouldn't? Let the king live forever. And then he gives the answer. He gives the answer.

We find here a sad situation, to summarize our first point. Nehemiah is helpless. He is hopeless. He is faced with a situation he can't really change. There is nothing he himself can do. He's one man, 900 miles away from home, several generations removed from the days of glory, the days of peace.

And he is facing up with a pagan king who, as far as he knows, will be no help to him whatsoever, at this stage anyway. But Nehemiah, I saw last week, he trusts in the God of heaven and earth.

He knows the king worships his pagan gods. He knows the king is a powerful man. But Nehemiah has a greater faith in a greater king whose power is ultimate.

[ 33 : 50 ] And in one sense, Nehemiah has nothing to lose. He has nothing to lose. But really, it's a sad situation, without much help and without much hope.

That leads into the next section, verse 5 down to verse 8, where we see the sad situation giving way to a sovereign plan. The sad situation now gives way to the beginnings of us seeing God's sovereign plan. The king said to me, what are you requesting? End of verse 4. Nehemiah.

So I prayed to the God of heaven, and I said to the king. So on down to verse 8. In this section here, we see an incredible thing taking place in the most normal of ways.

Verse 5 down to verse 8. It's just a conversation. Where Nehemiah gives his impossible request to the king. If it pleases the king, and if your servant has found favor in your sight, send me home, give me some men, give me some army, give me some help, let me go please.

It's all he's saying there. Let me go home please, give me some help. A normal conversation. In that normal conversation, we see God working his sovereign power.

[ 35 : 16 ] And that's the glory of how our Lord works things together. The Lord takes the normal and uses the normal for his power and for his glory.

What is here a standard conversation to Nehemiah and the king. What is here a hopeless conversation, really? A hopeless request from Nehemiah to the king.

The Lord uses this conversation. The Lord uses this request to bring about the beginnings of a restoration of Jerusalem.

If Nehemiah had understood and had fully given in to the weight of the situation, as he faces this powerful king, arrayed, we are sure, in all his glory, all his gold, his power surrounding him and around him, as Nehemiah saw him and said, actually, I'm going to keep my mouth shut.

I'm going to say nothing and do nothing and just keep on serving him his wine and not bother about the gospel cause, not bother about the rebuilding of my home.

[ 36 : 24 ] Then the story ends and nothing happens. But Nehemiah trusts in the God he is praying to, and therefore he has a power through the God who gives him power to have a conversation with the king that feels so small, that feels so useless, but actually the Lord uses, as I said, to begin the restoration work of the city.

Amen. Why bother? Why bother in two weeks' time give out an invitation?

Why bother in a few weeks' time invite someone along to our Christmas service here? Why bother in a few weeks' time invite someone along perhaps to the carol event? Why bother next year invite your neighbour or your friend along to Christianity Explored?

Why bother next May perhaps, God willing, invite someone along to back to church Sunday? Because why bother? Because, you know, your word's so small.

And it hasn't worked before, has it? It hasn't ever worked before. You've tried before. You've invited before. You've asked them to come along to church before, and they've said no before.

[ 37 : 42 ] Or you've tried before, and it was too nerve-wracking, so you thought, I can't do it, and you won't try again. Why bother? Why bother? It's just you. Just you and your small words.

Just you and your small faith. Just you and your small efforts. It's no use. And again, that is not what we see in Nehemiah.

As scared as we are giving an invite to our neighbour, I'm sure his fear in talking to the king is infinitely greater, and yet he girds his loins, he trusts his prayer will be answered, and he says to the king, here is my request.

And from that then flows the rest of the book. As we said, going forward, part of the reason we're going through this book is to encourage us as we approach our invite service, our invitation service, on the 15th of December, God willing, where invitations are there in the months, there'll be two in each envelope.

Take an envelope with you, and give out these invitations, knowing that as you do your small work, perhaps with small faith, perhaps with small hope, the Lord will build his church in his way.

[ 39 : 01 ] Brothers and sisters, using you and me, and we are small people, and our faith is small, our understanding is small, our ability is small. Poor Nehemiah.

Yes, he's got a book named after him in Scripture, but in many ways, this is a poor Jewish descendant, immigrant, migrant, captured, slave, really, and he's there with nothing and no one around him, and yet he is able to trust the Lord enough, and the Lord then uses the words of Nehemiah, uses his normal conversation to bring about his purposes in his way at his perfect time.

Nehemiah did not wait or pray for great signs or great visions be given to him. He didn't wait for great miraculous ways to be opened for him. He did what he could.

He did how he could do it. He goes and he talks. He goes and he asks. He does what he can with the limited power he has and the limited access he has.



To remind us all, brothers and sisters, you have access to people that I do not. Now, we try, we all try and mix as much as we can, and I've enjoyed meeting plenty of people in the last wee while in the village.

[ 40 : 20 ] But we know there is still a strange barrier at times. Sadly, it shouldn't be there, but it is there, between the community at times and the minister.

We're working on that, but they still sometimes see ministers, myself, as somehow other to them, and they perhaps won't share with me or talk with me as honestly as they would yourselves.

You see them, you know them, you grew up with them perhaps. You have access in a way that I do not. Use that access well. Invite, share, pray specifically, and trust, as Nehemiah did, the Lord of heaven will do his work in his way.

Well, the request we know works pretty well. The king, quite simply, and you can tell he's a real king, a real bureaucrat, his only question is, how long will you be and when do you come back?

That's all he cares about. Poor Nehemiah, you can almost feel the relief of poor Nehemiah as the king says to him, great goal, how long will you be? Simple as that. All the fear, all the panic we see in this poor man and it's all fine.

[ 41 : 35 ] Anyway, he goes off and the king gives him and grants him a request, he gives him the men, he gives him the wood, he sends him off towards the city. We then meet him again now, verse 9 down to verse 17, where a sad situation then led to the sovereign plan.

We now see a structural examination, a structural examination. As Nehemiah arrives at the city, finally, he's heard so much about it, now he gets close to the city.

As he arrives to the city, and we'll just touch this very briefly just now because it comes up later on in our book together. He first finds this external threat to the cause, verse 9 and verse 10, where he has these opposing kings, these opposing kingdoms, these opposing provincial governors who are who are against, fully against, the work that's about to take place, and we'll touch on that a bit more later on.

Nehemiah is safe from them for now, but trouble is brewing in the future for them. As we come to verse 10, we see things don't change.

How is it summarized, these provincial governors? How is it summarized their hatred towards the cause? It displeased them greatly that someone had come to seek the welfare of the people of Israel, the people of God.

[ 43 : 04 ] We live in a world that does not care for the welfare of the people of God. Of course it doesn't. Why would it? They hate him too. We should never be surprised when the world does not care for the things of God.

It should not shock us. This is not our home. We are pilgrims passing through. Yes, being salt and light and witnesses and ambassadors, we're passing through.

It should never shock us. The world does not care for the things of God as we do. It can't. It will never. And we'll see this in the weeks to come.

So I won't go into it just now. And Nehemiah soon has to come up face to face with reality. But the reality has changed. The times have changed. The opposition has grown and changed.

God has not changed. His power, His plan has not changed. But in order to best serve God, their mindset has to change.

[ 44 : 14 ] We'll see it in a few weeks' time. And to go and check out what he says about the same situation. The old men cry, they wail, they grieve because the new temple wasn't like the old temple.

The new building wasn't like the old building. They don't see the fact they should be rejoicing there is still a new building. We grieve at times, rightfully so, that things are not as they should be.

But there is this external pressure on the things of God. Brothers and sisters, this world is not our home. Let's never be shocked or surprised at the reality of external threat towards God's kingdom or God's work.

He arrives at the city gates and he does it by secret for various reasons. We'll see it more later on. But he spends his time, he inspects, verse 11 onwards, he inspects thoroughly every part of the city that's vaguely left intact.

He checks out the gates and he sees the detail he gives there in verse 14. He might pass it by, but stop for a second.

[ 45 : 27 ] He's a small animal, a small donkey of sorts, and he goes to this gate, the fountain gate, and the gate is so destroyed, so crumbled in on itself, but even the mule, the donkey below him can't fit into the gate.

The fountain gate, we know from history, as far as we understand, was big. It was glorious. It was beautiful. It was the, it was almost the, the, the, the relaxation area of the city.

you go there for your, your, I push this bad days, but you go there for your, your pools of water and your fountains, and it's a beautiful part.

It was a green, luscious part with plants, somewhat planted, nothing else. Big gate, glorious gate, and now so crumbled down that not even a mule can fit under the gap.

In other words, it's gone. The whole thing is totally gone. And Nehemiah shows us here, just in brief, what must be done as we look to the gospel work here, even in North Tulsa.

[ 46 : 44 ] We're not building a city again, but we are seeking the cause of God to be growing in our midst. We must, like Nehemiah, be willing to engage in a painful, at times, structural, examination.

Imagine the poor pain. It's one thing for Nehemiah hearing about the destruction of the walls and the gates. Another thing for him to see through his own eyes and to touch it and to smell it, perhaps.

Just the complete destruction and degradation of this city, of this area, really. It's gone. He heard all the stories from his forefathers, his grandfathers, his people, telling him the beauty of his city, the glory of his city, the power of his city, and the first time he's ever seen it, it is now nothing but ruin and rubble and dust and mess and chaos.

Nothing is salvageable, it seems. Everything is destroyed. Nevertheless, he takes his time. He examines gate by gate.

He examines section by section, area by area. He inspects and understands the work that needs to be done.

[ 48 : 08 ] Brothers and sisters, often this is the hardest part. The hardest part is seeing what work needs to be done, having that honest conversation of ourselves, that what the state actually is like.

It's one thing, as it were, plastering over the cracks, but eventually the cracks persist until it hits the foundation and the cracks are then a much bigger problem to deal with.

Now, Amaya here leaves no room. He inspects the wall. He inspects every part of a wall from gate to gate, up and down, it seems. He takes his time quietly, privately, carefully.

He has an honest, as it were, conversation of himself as he sees what needs to be done. Before the building work begins, there has to be this diagnostic work, this diagnosing work of seeing where the problems are, as it were, where the gaps are that need to be filled, where the crumbling wall is that need to be rebuilt carefully and properly.

Our question then is, what might this look like for us? What does this look like for our congregation? Or perhaps, and these are just ideas, we apply them as we can, perhaps for some it might look like looking at areas of disunity in the congregation and seeing what work needs to be done there.

[ 49 : 44 ] And often, even with disunity, sometimes the minister and the elders, we're the last to hear about it. You yourselves hear about it, perhaps you yourselves are going through it. I'm not saying there is, not for a second I'm saying there is, that's the whole point though.

The whole point is perhaps you're seeing cracks that we can't see yet. Perhaps there's disunity between yourselves and someone else in the congregation. Then you deal with that. You deal with that to God's glory.

You patch in that crack as best you can before it gets any worse. It might mean all of us having hard conversations.

It might mean practically having some structural changes to our building. Maybe. It might mean changing perhaps how we do some things. It might mean we have to put our preference behind and the gospel work before.

Who knows? Who knows how the Lord might lead. It might mean the painful but necessary work of taking everything we do back to Scripture, stripping everything else away and saying, what are we doing?

[ 50 : 50 ] How are we doing it? And are we right in how we're doing it? Again, I have no agenda here. Just thinking out loud. Taking us aware of the walls back to the base and seeing what the base is like, then building up strong again in some areas.

We pray that the call of Nehemiah in verse 17 will be the gospel call for we hear in the weeks, months, God willing, years ahead. He turns to the people and I said to them, you see the trouble we are in, how Jerusalem lies in ruins, with its gates burned.

Come, let us build the wall of Jerusalem. But we may no longer suffer derision. And our prayer is that our response would be the end of verse 18 there.

Any one of us respond back, let us rise up and build. Brothers and sisters, we have a great mission field around us.

we have a great opportunity ahead of us. It's a very insightful but an obvious point to make. It's what I heard recently listening to a discussion of some American ministers.

[ 52 : 18 ] A very simple reminder, talking to you about how ministers look at ministry, they're saying, remember in your ministry, you will never complete your job.

you will retire or you will die or you will leave the congregation never having completed your job. That's a good thing. Brothers and sisters, the same for us.

We will serve all the years of our life, we will pass into glory never having seen the work fully complete. Why not? Because the work is never fully complete until the end comes.

We pray we would see days of gospel growth and gospel flourishing in North Tulsa. The work does not begin with me and it will not end with me or any of us.

It is his work in his way in his time. But that does not mean we are not part of it, an essential part of it. This is our time, this is our place and we're called, like Nehemiah calls the people, to work whilst we can.

[ 53 : 23 ] after Nehemiah's day, we do see the walls don't last forever. The city is again years to come, is destroyed.

We'll see that going forward. Does that mean that Nehemiah's job was wasted, his time was wasted? No. In his day, in his time, he fulfills his calling the Lord gave him and the people.

If we are faithful to the call, to be witnesses, to be salt and light, it is not just wishful thinking to say for certain we will see gospel growth and gospel increase.

I'm not talking about numbers, numbers belong to the Lord, but I'm saying even in ourselves, we will see a gospel growth, a gospel increase, a discipling, a growing of our love and care for the Lord.

From that, may well then flow out, more numbers coming in, that is the Lord's work. But we're not looking for it as numbers coming in, we're looking for ourselves to be so full of the love and care of the Lord that we then go out, are empowered to go out, to share, to discuss and to compel, to encourage, to lovingly invite, to tenderly remind friends, family and neighbours of the danger their souls are in, but also of a great saviour of souls, the Lord Jesus Christ.

[ 54 : 55 ] The timeline I cannot guarantee, how long the work will take, I cannot give an answer. What we can guarantee, as we seek to serve the Lord faithfully, as we seek the good of North Tolstab, the building up of the walls as it were of the gospel cause here, the Lord will prosper, the Lord will give the increase, as we sow in tears, as we continually do the work of planting the seed and watering and planting and watering, of building the walls as it were, brick by brick, brick at times by painful brick, the Lord will do his work.

work, but not without problems or complications and drawbacks and times of great worry and stress. We'll see that in the chapters ahead. The rebuilding of a city is not, by any means, an easy task, even looking at the chapter headings.

Next week, opposing the work. Week after then, we see work starting again. Week after that, a conspiracy against Nehemiah. Then again, the work carries on, and so on. But yet, through challenge and tribulation and doubt and worry and pain, God is building up the city.

Brothers and sisters, God is building his kingdom in North Tulsa. Not just through one ministry or one congregation, but we're certainly part of it. Let's be encouraged then, going into this new week.

For this new week, it's never a chance for us, every one of us, to keep on, as it were, working on building the wall of the city, and building up the gospel cause, and trusting that the Lord is able, in his way, and in his time, to bring his people to himself.

[ 56 : 51 ] It's about our heads in that, a word of prayer. We thank you, Lord, for the great gift of the accounts of these people of old. We pray, Lord, we give you thanks for the life of Nehemiah, as he bravely, we are sure, with knocking knees and trembling hands, as he approached the king, and as he put his request, his impossible request before the king.

We see that request being answered. Give us, we ask, that same faith to trust that you are able to do what we cannot even begin to imagine or conceive of in our minds, that you are able to bring things to full fruition.

We pray for the gospel walls of North Tulsa to be built up once more. Pray, Lord, for the gates to be restored. Pray for a happy and prosperous gospel kingdom to be built up here.

And once more, Lord, we pray it knowing it is all yours, that we are part-time workers. Our time comes, our time goes. We will leave the scene of eternity, the scene of time.

As long as you have your people in this place, the work will carry on. We thank you for that great reassurance that though we are a small part of the work, we are an essential part for here and for now.

[ 58 : 04 ] Encourage us then this new week to be faithful servants, faithfully doing the work, whatever sphere you call us to, understanding that we come to a saviour who cares and who loves his church infinitely more than we ever will, who cares and who loves North Tulsa more than we ever will.

We know we sing words that are faithful and perfect and true. Let's call these things in Jesus' name and for his sake alone. Amen. Let's conclude by singing together that great psalm of building up, Psalm 127.

The image of a building, of a city being built, and the image of a family being built up. And the image of Psalm 127, the one vision it gives us. So every increase, every sense of growth that is good, it all comes from the Lord.

Psalm 127. To God's praise. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.  
Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.  
Amen. Amen. Amen. key to King, to feed on sorrow's bread, so gives He has beloved  
sleep.

O happy is that man hath met his prayer, the prayer of the host.

With the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, both of you now and forevermore. Amen.