

# The Walls Are Broken

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 27 October 2024

Preacher: Rev Donald M Macleod

- [ 0 : 0 0 ] Brothers and sisters, the same intimations as we had in the morning. We still have a few intimation sheets of the back door. Again, all our worship this evening, all our sung worship is also from the Scottish Psalter.
- So first of all then, from the Psalter, we worship God by singing together in Psalm 93. Scottish Psalter, Psalm 93. That's on page 354.
- Psalm 93 on page 354. Sing the whole Psalm together.
- The Lord of rain and clothed is he with majesty most bright. His works to show him clothed to do we and girt about with might. The world is also established, but it cannot depart.
- Thy throne is fixed of old and vowed from everlasting art. Psalm 93. The whole Psalm to God's praise. The Lord of rain and clothed is he with majesty most bright.
- [ 1 : 2 0 ] His works to show him clothed to do we and girt about with might.
- The world is also established, but it cannot depart. The world is also established, but it cannot depart.
- The world is also established, but it cannot depart. Thy world is fixed of old and vowed from everlasting art.
- The world is also established, the world isobeaning. God's for a long road. God's for a long heaving, joy and reusable art. The Lord is also defined, as ■■■end to do we and girt about with the great as Monte period.
- our rzecz apo v o o Forgive them, Lord, that is all I did, so wrong I died of love.
- [ 3 : 0 7 ] Land tis of can■■■ waters, in glorious shield, O town.
- Lightest give of his heavenly heart, In faithfulness they say, And holiness forever, Lord, And our kingdom of heaven.
- Let's join together in prayer. Thank you, Lord, for gathering us together once more this evening. We thank you that we can both begin and end this day, this set-aside day of worship and praise, this set-aside day of rest, that we can begin it and bring it to a conclusion, worshipping you.
- We know as we begin this new week, we step out into this week not knowing what lies ahead of us. In fact, having no idea what tomorrow, what this evening can hold, we come this evening with our hopes and our plans, our expectations of this week, but we know that the reality of what we will face is beyond us.
- So we begin this new week trusting in you, that you're the God who knows not just this week, but the rest of this year, the rest of all time, the rest of our time, that everything is known to you.
- [ 5 : 0 1 ] Help us as we then approach you just now in worship. Help us to have a right attitude towards you, to have a heart just now that is full of the praise and worship of a God who is eternally deserving of it, but also to have a mind ready to listen to your word.
- Help us not just to be hearers, but to be doers of a word, to seek, to put into practice all that we hear and all that we are taught. Help us first then to listen well.

Help us first then to pay attention to your holy word. We confess that we often find ourselves at times, we find ourselves not listening as carefully, we find ourselves at times not paying attention to what it is you're saying to us.

As you speak, we know we come to a word that is real, a word that is living, a word that is powerful. Help us then not to neglect the great privilege we have of being under your holy word.

Remember just now, brothers and sisters, who would long for the same privilege, brothers and sisters who do not have the great privilege we have of having your full word in front of them, who have perhaps parts of that word or portions of that word, but who as of yet, in their own language, do not have the fullness of your word.

[ 6 : 20 ] We pray just now for them, those that are part of that word, that you would bless that to them. We know there are many brothers and sisters around this world who are saved and who are being saved through just the smallest portions of your scripture.

We pray just now this evening, especially for those who are engaged in Bible translation work. Thank you for their diligence. We thank you for them making the most of their giftings.

Those who have great linguistic giftings looking at the many complicated ways of language of this world and dialects and seeking to bring your word to life.

We thank you it was once done for us many years ago, done again for our people here in the Gaelic many years after that, to hear you speak to us in a language we heard our parents speak to us.

It is a glorious thing. We ask that your name would be known and praised across our world this evening. We understand that we are here at this crossroads in time.

[ 7 : 20 ] We are here in this place at this time. And we know as we look back over the years, we see many years of blessing. As we look back perhaps over our own lives and over the life of this congregation and this community, we look back and we see many ways that you once blessed your people here.

You once blessed your word and your work in this place. And we find ourselves questioning. We find ourselves worrying. We find ourselves wondering what has changed, where these days of blessing have gone, where these times of goodness have now seemingly disappeared off to, where the many of your people are now with you.

Help us, Lord, then to, with that gospel-shaped optimism, to look forward and to say that what was once, yes, it was glorious, that we are now where we are.

We are now who we are in the world where we find ourselves. Help us, then, to be faithful servants. Help us to be very much in the here and now of one eye looking forward and one eye looking down to the reality of our world.

Help us to be salt and light in our own homes this new week, to be salt and light in places of work and in our village. Help all that we do glorify you, magnify you.

[ 8 : 37 ] Pray just now, Lord, for our friends, both here this evening and our friends and family at home, who as of yet cannot say they have a full understanding, who as of yet cannot say that they have a saving understanding in who Jesus is, who as of yet cannot say that he is theirs and that they are his.

We thank you for their presence here week after week. We thank you for their support. We thank you that they are here to hear your word. And we ask that again, and we do so with faith based not in the preaching, but not in the words, but faith based in you and in your word as you work through it, that you would transform and change hearts and minds and lives here this evening.

Help us to be a people who are trusting that you are the God who is able, that you have yet your people in North Tulsa.

We know that is true because we find ourselves still here serving you and seeking to serve you. Until the end comes, we know you are still gathering your people together. Help us then to be faithful in the duties you have given us.

Help us to be faithful builders, to be faithful servants, to keep on putting stone upon stone as it were, as faithful farmers, faithful sowers, to keep on sowing that seed day by day.

[ 9 : 57 ] Sometimes we sleep rested, other times we sleep weeping, thinking of the gospel cause. We do pray for the gospel cause across our island. We thank you for the good news we do here that there are still some and many a times who are coming to know you.

Again, we look back to days of blessing and we mourn these days that are now gone. But help us instead to look forward and to say and to cry out, Lord, would you do it again?

Lord, would you move again? And if it's your will, we ask once more for days of blessing, for days of gospel flourishing, even in North Tulsa. If we pray for ourselves, we're mindful of the wider presbytery, the wider world, the wider denominations, but we do pray locally this evening especially.

Pray once more for our local presbyteries. We pray again especially for our vacant congregations. Over the next few weeks, we'll, with your help, pray for them. We pray especially then this evening for South Uist.

We ask that you would build up your cause in that place where your people are so far spread apart, where even small distances take a good while to travel, where the gospel cause seems to be ongoing, but also seems to be a time to be so small.

[ 11 : 17 ] Pray just now for the small congregation in Castleby. We thank you for them. We also pray, Lord, for the congregation meeting further north as they meet morning and then again evening, week by week, as they seek to engage your community with the life-giving gospel.

Pray for them in a time of vacancy. Pray for those who are there as assessor elders. Pray for the intermoderator. Pray, Lord, for all that's going on. Help us not to forget them, to know that as they seek to serve you, they are doing your work.

We thank you for the gift of settled ministry. Thank you that you're the God who gives your people leaders, leaders who are servant leaders, leaders who are there to wash the feet of your people, who are there to serve them in however they are able to do.

We pray you'd raise up more servant leaders, raise up more workers. We know that the vineyard, the fields we see are ripe and ready for harvest.

But we still see the fact, it was true these many years ago, the workers are still few. We ask you'd raise up more and more workers. We'd see more and more wish to serve you in the mission field but also closer to home more and more young men come and feel that call into ministry.

[ 12 : 33 ] We see the desire grow week after week, year after year. The numbers of young men going into ministry is not growing. We leave that with you.

We encourage and we support that you alone will bring, as it were, the increase and all the ideas you do bring increase. Help us this evening to be a listing people, to be a ready people.

Help us this evening to leave this place having said it was good for us to be here. We do pray, especially this evening as we begin a new venture. We ask that you be with the youth fellowship. We ask that you bless what goes on in that short hour and a bit after the service.

Lord, that you be glorified through all we seek to do, all we strive to do. For all we do, we do it for your sake and for your glory. Forgive us our sins, we ask again this evening.

Forgive us our waywardness. Forgive us our backsliding at times. Forgive us for our lack of faith at times, our lack of trust in who you are. We come this evening crying out for forgiveness but knowing that for those of us who know Jesus, forgiveness is ours truly and eternally because of the finished work of our Saviour.

[ 13 : 45 ] In his name and for his sake we ask these things. Amen. If you remember, we said we're beginning a new series this evening. We announced it a few weeks ago actually really but we're turning to Nehemiah.

There will be a few weeks in Nehemiah and probably a break over the winter period and then start again then into the next year. Nehemiah, it's on page 370.

Page 370. Just after Ezra. It's not always the easiest one to find. Nehemiah, page 370.

After Ezra and before Esther and Job. Nehemiah. Read just chapter 1 together.

Nehemiah chapter 1. Let's hear together God's word. The words of Nehemiah, the son of Hakaliah.

[ 14 : 48 ] Now it happened in the month of Hislev, the twentieth year, as I was in Susa, the citadel, that Hanai, one of my brothers, came with a certain men from Judah.

And I asked them concerning the Jews who escaped, who had survived the exile, and concerning Jerusalem. And they said to me, the remnant there in the province who had survived the exile is in great trouble and shame.

The wall of Jerusalem is broken down and the gates are destroyed by fire. As soon as I heard these words, I sat down and wept and mourned for days.

And I continued fasting and praying before the God of heaven. And I said, O Lord, God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments.

Let your ear be attentive and your eyes open to hear the prayer of your servant that I now pray before you day and night for the people of Israel, your servants, confessing the sins of the people of Israel, which we have sinned against you.

[ 15 : 55 ] Even I and my father's house have sinned. We have acted very corruptly against you, have not kept your commandments, the statutes and the rules that you commanded your servant Moses.

Remember the word that you commanded your servant Moses, saying, If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the peoples. But if you return to me and keep my commandments and do them, though you are outcasts in the uttermost parts of heaven, from there I will gather them and bring them to the place that I have chosen to make my name dwell there.

They are your servants and your people whom you have redeemed by your great power and by your strong hand. O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of your servant, to the prayer of your servants who delight to fear your name and give success to your servant today and grant him mercy in the sight of this man.

Now I was a cupbearer to the king. So on, give praise to God for his power and his glorious word.

Let's again sing to God's praise from the Scottish Psalter again in Psalm 29. Scottish Psalter, Psalm 29.

[ 17 : 17 ] Psalm 29, we can sing verses 3 down to verse 8 of the psalm. Psalm 29, verses 3 down to verse 8.

The Lord's voice on the waters is the God of majesty. The thunder and the multitudes of waters sit of he. A powerful voice it is that comes out from the Lord most high.

The voice of that great Lord is full of glorious majesty. Psalm 29, verses 3 down to verse 8. To God's praise. The Lord's voice on the waters is the God of majesty.

verse 8. The Verse on that gives up hard since the feet of the earth of hisorn H The voice of Thou, the glorious majesty, The voice of Thou, the glorious majesty,

The voice of Thou, the glorious majesty, The voice of Thou, the glorious majesty, The voice of Thou, the glorious majesty,

[ 20 : 38 ] The voice of Thou, the glorious majesty, The glorious majesty, The glorious majesty, The glorious majesty, The glorious majesty, The glorious majesty, there, Nehemiah chapter 1. Nehemiah chapter 1, as we said, this is the start of a new series for us. And as we go through the book, and I hope it's clear in the weeks to come, some parts and some nights there'll be one verse, other nights there'll be big chunks.

Because this, like any other account, it follows what actually took place. And sometimes a lot takes place in a few words. Other times a lot takes place over a big chunk. As we follow through then, Nehemiah will begin this evening just as an overview for us, really. Chapter 1 gives us an overview of what goes on in the rest of the book. And as much as I want to go on and go into depth straight away, it's good for us to lay some foundations. In fact, really, the whole point of this book is about the laying of foundations. As we journey later on with Nehemiah and the other returning exiles or returning descendants of the exiles back to their homeland being led in part by Nehemiah, as we journey with them, as we watch them begin to rebuild once more Jerusalem and the temple and so on. As we follow their footsteps, I want us in the back of our mind to apply it and to listen to the application of how we apply it to ourselves in North Tolstoy. I think, well, how?

We aren't being called. We aren't going to go and rebuild any temples or any cities anytime soon. But we'll hopefully see in the weeks to come that what's being done here is the Lord is using normal people to accomplish his extraordinary plan using normal means. And that's where we come together this evening as brothers and sisters. But we are normal people that the Lord uses and has used and will use in extraordinary ways to accomplish his incredible plan here in North Tolstoy. The Lord's work is the Lord's work. Yes, it takes different forms. But the Lord is always achieving his plan, achieving his will.

And as we saw, as we see how he does that through the life of Nehemiah, we can apply it hopefully to ourselves in a similar way. Now, again, this evening will mostly be some background for us. And before we even begin the background, one thing to say, in the Jewish canon, in the Jewish rendering of the scriptures, Nehemiah and Ezra are almost always, or Ezra actually, Nehemiah, are almost always one joint together book. There's no real difference. When Ezra ends, Nehemiah carries on as aware as chapter 11 of Ezra, we could say. There's a reason for that. Both these writers are doing the exact same job. There's some years between them. Ezra has gone first to try and begin rebuilding the temple, rebuilding, as you say, the city.

And Nehemiah then follows on after Ezra. So they're doing the same work. They're both trying to do and trying to build the same city. As we'll see that in the weeks to come, God willing, as we'll be going in and out occasionally of Ezra to help us understand what is going on. But today we join Nehemiah. Here he is, serving in a pagan king's court. We'll find out hopefully a bit about who he is and why he is beginning this journey. Just one or a few simple questions to help us as we begin. Very basic questions I hope we always ask when we come to scripture. The who, when, where and why of the text.

[ 25 : 06 ] First of all then, the where. Where are we as we come to read Nehemiah? Where is this man writing from? Well, Nehemiah, we see, is here in Susa, the citadel, in verse 1. He is here in Persia, in Babylon, greater Babylon. He is here roughly, well roughly, we actually know pretty accurately, he is here in the year 445 BC. So 445 years before Jesus is born, give or take. Here we have Nehemiah writing these words.

What's he doing there? Why is this Jewish man here in this pagan king's court? Why is he here with a good job, a cupbearer? We might think that's a servant's job. No, a cupbearer is a trusted job, it's a good job to have.

A cupbearer was there for various reasons, but you had to be a trust, a cupbearer, because if your enemy is going to poison you, he's going to poison you usually through your wine, and we see that elsewhere in scripture actually. So a cupbearer is a trusted job. Why is this Jewish man in this trusted job for this pagan king? Why is he here at all? Well, Nehemiah, along with the others, are mentioned here in the book. They are the descendants of those who were captured in the exile, who are captured and taken into Babylon about 140 years before this. So in 586, we see Jerusalem is attacked, destroyed, laid waste. And then 140 or so years later, Nehemiah is one of the many descendants who are now living and serving in Babylon in Susa here. His grandparents probably, if you do the maths of it, his great-grandparents, his great-great-grandparents were those captured in the exile. And here he is, three or four generations on. His parents were more likely born to Babylon. His grandparents possibly even born in Babylon, and he himself is here in Babylon. Culturally, he is Jewish. His people are Jewish. But his lineage for generation after generation now has been born in this foreign kingdom, in this pagan kingdom.

As we said, the Jewish canon, the Jewish scriptures put Nehemiah and Ezra together. As we said, because they're doing the same job. Ezra had previously, roughly, we're quite sure when really, you can't say for certain, but a few years before this book begins, Ezra had led some other Jewish descendants from the pagan area back into Jerusalem to begin rebuilding the city. And Nehemiah now carries on that work. As we go through Nehemiah in a few weeks, the whole book takes place in roughly eight years. So that chapter one, right to the end, is a span, roughly, of eight years. Some say up to ten years, but I have a way, eight to ten years. We follow this man and all his journey.

The next question then is, is why? Why is a pagan king about to allow, we'll see in a second, about to allow this Jewish man, this Jewish descendant and his friends and his workers, why is he allowing this man, who's got an important role in a king's court, why is he allowing him, or why will he allow him, to go and rebuild this city? Why is he allowing this to take place? Why does this pagan king care?

[ 28 : 56 ] Well, it's not, as you expect, out of the goodness of his own heart, that the king allows Nehemiah to go and do this work. With Jerusalem, Judah, it's all part of the king's kingdom. We'll see that later on. It's all part of the king's kingdom. It all belongs to him. He's not just being nice, actually, it benefits him, but this city in the outer region of his kingdom is rebuilt and strengthened again.

Now, where Nehemiah here is, is Susa. From Susa, roughly, to Jerusalem, 900 miles. Now, that's as a crow flies. It's 900 miles. Now, how much further it actually is when you're having to travel yourself on foot, especially back then, we can't even begin to see. A huge distance, a huge, huge distance, but the king seems happy for the work to be done. He seems happy, this king, king, Artaxerxes, that this man, Nehemiah, will go and help rebuild this broken down city.

In fact, this whole book, only two locations are really mentioned, two recurring locations. Jerusalem, and where he is here, Susa. Susa isn't the capital of the king's kingdom.

The king was so rich, and his wealth and power was so vast. We know from history, King Artaxerxes had almost a temple, an area, a castle, we could say, a citadel, a whole compound for each of the months of the year. And this is wintertime, and in wintertime, he spent his time in Susa.

It's by the coast, it's probably a bit warmer, and he is here enjoying his opulence, enjoying his wealth. So that's the context. Jewish exile, a third or fourth or fifth generation man, born, brought up in this pagan world, here as cupbearer to the king, and he receives a strange report. He receives a worrying report.

[ 31 : 17 ] That's our first or second section here, verses 1 down to verse 3. It happened in the month of his life, the twentieth year, as I was in Susa the citadel, that Hanai, one of my brothers, now that's either brother by blood, or the word is quite obscure there, is either brother by blood, or brother in terms of another Jewish brother, in terms of another Jewish man.

Either way, but Hanai, one of my brothers, came with certain men from Judah. They've been out to scout the land. They've been out to see how the building work of Ezra has been going.

How is the great city of Jerusalem, is it being built up well? 900 miles. You know, you're taking years, and almost a year probably, for news to go and come back again.

They reckon it takes about five months on foot for this journey. Call it six months, if you're taking your time. Call it a year for one message to go one way, and then back again on foot.

So they're waiting. Nehemiah, and I'm sure all the other Jews, they came about their homeland. They've heard the stories of how good things were once in the olden days. Heard stories of God's goodness.

[ 32 : 33 ] Heard stories of the glorious city, and the temple, and everything else. Nehemiah, they say, well, how are things going? How is the construction going? How is the reconstruction going?

Well, poor Hanai has bad news for Nehemiah. Technically, the exile ends around 538 BC.

And we see here that some Jews return back home. See that. I asked them, verse 2, concerning the Jews who escaped, who had survived the exile.

There are some Jews who escaped the exile. Some Jews had returned home after the exile. But many Jews just stayed in Babylon. They just stayed when the exile was over.

When they could have returned, they chose not to return for various reasons. Some escaped. So remnant here, those left behind, are some who escaped the exile, their descendants.

[ 33 : 36 ] And some who returned home, their descendants. And these children of the children of the children of the first Jews taken away, they give the report to Hanai.

And how does the report read? Well, Hanai says, I asked them concerning the Jews who escaped, who had survived the exile, because they're in Jerusalem.

And they said to me, As we said, over the years, year after year, group after group, had gone to try and begin and carry on the building work of Jerusalem.

This is the fourth or fifth, some say even seventh or eighth party, Nehemiah's party, who have gone to try and rebuild this city. So you expect Nehemiah is waiting for good news.

How is the glorious city? Can we all go back home again soon? Is the Lord's work seen there? Is the Lord's presence descended again there? Are God's people serving in the temple again there?

[ 34 : 54 ] You can almost hear the expectation in poor Nehemiah's voice as he asks for an update. And of course, the update, we'll see in a second, it absolutely crushes poor Nehemiah.

Absolutely crushes him. The people who have gone to build this city, these Jewish believers who loved their Lord, who went back home and who had come back together again.

These great work parties of hundreds of thousands of men are there building up the city. And all the work, it's all come to absolutely nothing.

They're all in great trouble. An understatement we'll see later on by the believers. A great understatement. Not just great trouble. They're being killed. They're being attacked left, right and centre.

And they're in great shame. Why are they in shame? Well, their job is simple. Their calling is simple. Go rebuild the city. Go prepare for the Lord's people again.

[ 35 : 57 ] A homeland for them. Go do the work. And the work has been absolutely destroyed. Absolutely destroyed. The wall is broken down.

Surrounding perimeter wall. And the gates are destroyed by fire. Never words. There's no city. There's no outside perimeter wall being broken.

The gates are gone. The two defences against the outside getting in and destroying the place even more. They haven't even got that anymore. The inside of the city was destroyed.

But previous parties had God at least erected a new wall around the city. And new gates. They began working on the inside. But even now, the outside wall has been destroyed.

There's nothing left. There's no cause left in the land. There's no city to be found. It's just rubble. Rubble and broken people.

[ 37 : 02 ] Rubble and people who have failed. They might think at least. People who see here are greatly ashamed of themselves and of their work.

How then does Nehemiah react to this awful news? What's his first instinct when he hears of a disaster, but his beloved homeland is still in absolute ruin?

Here's the first lesson I hope of many we will learn together from our time in this book. Nehemiah turns, of course, to pray. He turns to pray.

Verse 4. As soon as I heard these words, I sat down and wept and mourned for days. And I continued fasting and praying before the God of heaven.

Now, the prayer we're about to see here. He's praying. He's doing prayers day by day, hour by hour. He's praying a lot. This is just probably a summary of the content of what he's saying in these prayers.

[ 38 : 12 ] As we said a few weeks ago in the morning, a series looking at the gospel and what the gospel says to various life issues. We saw the gospel and grief. Note, in short, what Nehemiah does here.

As he hears about the Lord's work being completely destroyed. As he feels his own heart sink down inside him. The first thing he does is he grieves. He grieves.

As soon as I heard these words, I sat down and wept. For days. He's not eating. He's not drinking. He's crying and praying in silence.

He's just gone. No wonder. The hope he had. The hope he had. Gone. The plans he had to return home again for now. Probably gone.

The great visions he had of his youth. As the elders and the older ones told him of the great glory days of Jerusalem. Gone. Brothers and sisters.

[ 39 : 11 ] At times. At times. Grief is good. At times. Grief is needed. To make the first point of connection perhaps to ourselves.

In a small way. We hear often. About the good. And glorious days of gospel work in our land. And there are good stories to hear.

There are good stories to tell. We should in fact. Think about. And talk about. And remind ourselves and others. About the way the Lord has worked. In the days gone by.

But there is no harm in discussing that. It's good for us. And a part of our hearts. And we should well be grieved. When we hear. And think about.



As it were. The days of Jerusalem being fully built up. And now we hear the walls are broken. We hear the gate has been destroyed. By fire.

[ 40 : 08 ] As we see ourselves. At least to our understanding. From the days of glory. Of gospel glory. And gospel power. We once saw. We now see.

A church. A gathering of God's people. Across our land. And the walls look pretty much broken at times. The gates look pretty much destroyed.

By fire. The beauty is gone. And by our eyes. The power seems to have gone too. And like Nehemiah. But at times we say.

And we may think to the Lord. How? Why? We grieve. What we perhaps once ourselves saw. Or ourselves once heard about.

The days of gospel flourishing. Days of gospel blessing. Days of gospel building up. And now. At times we see. In our nation. In our land.

[ 41 : 07 ] Rubble. And destruction. And grief is okay. It is okay to say to the Lord. That this hurts us. That we wish it wasn't this way.

That we wish it wasn't so. That we wish something. Was different. All the years. Of gospel work.

All the years. Of prayer. Of the saints. All the years. Of preaching. And teaching. And we think. Where is the evidence?

Where is the great city? All this teaching. All this prayer. All this work. Has been building up. It looks still to be just ruins. And rubble. And nothing to be seen.

Even in North Ulster. Where is all the work gone? I promise. Not for a second. Does this book allow us.

[ 42 : 01 ] To keep thinking that way. As we go on. But for now. We are with Nehemiah. At this point. And we may well join him in grieving. As we are heartbroken.

To realize. The work is perhaps not. Where it should be. And not where we think it is. Perhaps. Even soon enough.

I don't know what's happening. This prayer. Next presbytery. Gordon MacLeod. The discipleship worker. Is going to present us. I believe. With. Some statistics. From the latest census.

I mean a few months ago. Last year it was now. Reverend. Callum. In Stornoway. He presented us. A talk. A presbytery. Showing us.

The Western Isles statistics. Population. And church attendance. We know this fact. Let's hear it again. On paper. The gospel cause.

[ 42 : 56 ] In the Western Isles. Is the lowest. It has been. Probably since. These records began. Church attendance. Is plummeting. Those.

Becoming Christians. On paper. New conversions. New conversions. New members. Is going down. And we think. Man. The walls are crumbled.

The walls are broken. The gates are on fire. And we might grieve. And perhaps we should grieve. Perhaps we must grieve. There is much work.

To be done. And we will see that. In the next few weeks. But we follow. The example of Nehemiah. And the first thing we see. Is this man. He. Praise. Our concern.

Is North Tolstah. Our concern. Is the gospel work. Here in North Tolstah. Yes. We have greater concerns. And greater worries. But actually. Our major concern. And my major concern. Is the gospel work.

[ 43 : 58 ] Again from the Glen. To Gary. That's it. We engage. Our groups. And we must do. We are part of a worldwide church. We know that. But most of our work.

Concerns here. Doesn't it? Most of our prayers. Concern here. Yes. We may look back. To days in this church. Was far more full.

Far more busy. Days when there were. Far more people here. Days when there were. Greater. Perhaps far more. In our minds at least. Saints and believers.

Brothers and sisters. Who were so full of the Lord. And so full of prayer. And everything else. And faith. And we see ourselves. And we think. Oh man. What's happening? We turn.

Like Nehemiah. To prayer. We turn. To prayer. How does he pray? I said.

[ 44 : 54 ] Oh Lord. God of heaven. The great and awesome God. Who keeps covenant. And steadfast love. With those who love him. And keep his commandments.

Who's he praying to? Oh Lord God. Oh Yahweh Elohim. Oh Yahweh Adonai.

Yahweh. And he describes who Yahweh is. In this prayer. Oh Yahweh. Who keeps covenant. And steadfast love. Of those who love him.

And keep his commandments. We. Like Nehemiah. Trust. In a God. Who keeps. His covenant. His cause.

Might well look. Low. And slow. But he. Is not defeated. The walls. Look like. They are crumbling down. The gates.

[ 45 : 51 ] Now look like. They are on fire. But has he. Changed. Does Yahweh. Change. Is he not still. The covenant. Keeping. Covenant. Making. God.

Who keeps his people. And who brings in. More people. To his glorious kingdom. He. He hasn't. Changed. And Nehemiah.

Appeals. To his covenant. Keeping nature. To the nature. Of his chesed love. His steadfast love. And we'll see this feature. Again and again. Throughout the book. The steadfast love.

Of God. The immovable nature. Of God's goodness. Towards his people. As the wind. And the rain. Of the world. Batters against it. We. Move around. And we are battered.

And bruised. The Lord is not. His causes. Not. His plan. Is not. We are sure. Nehemiah. Probably wished. He was around. In the days. Of the glory.

[ 46 : 44 ] Of Jerusalem. But he isn't. He's 900 miles away. In a pagan's king court. Giving him wine. That's what he is. As beloved. Jerusalem.

As rubble. And ashes. And smoke. We perhaps. Long. That we were born. In a different time. In a different day. We perhaps.

Long. We were. Once again. Seeing. Great numbers. In North Tulsa. Come to know the Lord. And come to be in this place. We're not. In many ways.

We are also. 900 miles away. It feels like. We are here. Right now. Right here. This is. Our mission field. This is. Where the Lord. Has placed us. And bad grammar.

But. I'll say anyway. This is. When. The Lord. Has placed us. In this time frame. In. This reality. Yes. We may grieve. The days gone.

[ 47 : 39 ] But we are not there. We're here. If Nehemiah. Did. Not. Do anything else. If he just grieved. The days. And did nothing else. In the book. Ended chapter one. But we see.

The Lord. Had. Great. Plans. For Nehemiah. And for his people. And chapter. By chapter. Verse. By verse. We'll see that. The Lord.

Begins. To build up. His work. Through. These. Faithful. Servants. And the journey. They have to face. It is a hard one. It is a hard one.

When you read. Church history. When you read. Even our own history. Reading the prayers. Of the diary. Of Murdoch Campbell. Reading Murdoch Campbell's.

I didn't get a quote. From it. But. I'll get a quote. Next week. If I remember. Reading his diary. He often. His prayers. Sorry. His diary also. He often. Mourns. The lack.

[ 48 : 39 ] Of interest. In the gospel work. He often. Mourns. The declining numbers. You think. Man. If we. Had. Murdoch. Had. His congregations. His day.

We'd be overjoyed. The church fathers. Are mourning. The lack. Of interest. Since the apostles. Passed away. God's work. Humanly speaking.

Has always been. In our eyes. One of decline. We always see. The gospel cause. Declining. We always wish. It was more. God. God. Is always.

Building his church. And unlike. The gates. Of this city. Here. The gates. Of Jerusalem. In Nehemiah's day. What is the difference.

Between these gates. And the gates. Of God's kingdom. God's kingdom's. Gates. Are never to be. Destroyed. By fire. The wall. Is never broken down.

[ 49 : 35 ] All the enemy. Itself. All the attack. Of the evil one. Can never break it down. Nehemiah's about. To embark.

On a journey. The Lord. Is about. To providentially. Take Nehemiah. From where he is. To where he's about. To go. Back home. To Jerusalem. As we follow. The journey.

Of Nehemiah. Let's look. To ourselves. And ask. The question. How are we. Being led. To follow. As we were. In his footsteps. In the gospel.

Work. In North. Tolstair. The glorious thing. And we'll see this. Go willing. For now. And the end. Of the year. There are glimpses.

In the work. Of Nehemiah. That point. To the fact. That there's a greater work. Going on here. As the Lord. Takes his people. To himself. To a happy place.

[ 50 : 28 ] To a better place. We see. Nehemiah. Pointing forward. To one. Who cares. For his people. Far greater. Than any Nehemiah. Or any other minister. As we mourn.

The gospel. Cause. Perhaps. In our land. As we. Just now. Look forward. To seeing God. Work again. In North Tulsa. In power. We always remember.

And myself. Very much. With you. No one. Not a single minister. Or elder. Or member. Cares. More. For North Tulsa.

Than our Lord. Himself. We care. For gospel work here. We long. To see lives. Transformed here. We long. To see disciples. Being made here.

And grow here. As long as the Lord. Sees fit. It will be my. Life work. To be here. And to see that. If I spend every day. Of my life. Every day. Of my ministry.

[ 51 : 24 ] The Lord gives me. If it's all here. It still pales. Into nothingness. Compared. To the love. Of Jesus.

We are his church. He cares for us. He sees us. This is his cause. It is his gospel. We proclaim. And he. Will.

Bring. His. People in. From the Glen. To Gary. He will do it. It's up for us. Then. To trust.

That fact. To have that. Fact. In our minds. At the same time. As it were. To put the shovel. Into the ground. Get the bag of seeds. Ready. To sow.

And to sow. And to sow. And to water. And to water. And to water. Take every chance. The Lord gives us. And following on. Nehemiah. He knows.

[ 52 : 19 ] God is sovereign. He prays as much. In his prayer. But he also knows. He has a duty. To perform. And God's sovereignty. Rather than stopping. Nehemiah. To do anything.

It encourages. Nehemiah. In all his work. God is sovereign. He will bring. His people to himself. But brothers and sisters. He does so. Via means. And we are the means.

He has chosen. To use. As we are hearing. Week after week. From his word. So as we carry on now. Through. Nehemiah. God willing. The next few weeks. We see. The city.

Slowly. Being rebuilt. We pray. We would see the same. In our own experience. As God builds. And rebuilds. At times. His kingdom work. In North Tulsa.

It's about our heads now. A word of prayer. We thank you Lord. For the gift of your word. Once more. We thank you. That even in. The accounts. Of your servants. Of old. Even in accounts. Of their misery. And of their.

[ 53 : 14 ] Their horror. We give you praise. That even there. We see glimpses. Looking forward. To the coming of a saviour. Who would keep his people. Whose kingdom. Would not be destroyed.

By fire. Nor earthly enemies. Nor by. Spiritual enemies. But who will build. His church. In his way. In his time. We give you praise. This evening. We are part.

Of. His church. That this. Gathering. Of. Saints. Of brothers and sisters. Of sons and daughters. We are not our own.

We belong to the one. Who purchased us. With his precious blood. Help us then. With confidence. To begin this new week. Knowing that the work is yours. And yes. You have called us.

To a great task. The glorious task. Of being workers. In your vineyard. The glorious task. Of being salt. And light. We do so. With power and joy.

[ 54 : 09 ] Knowing you. Lead us forth. Pray Lord. For days ahead. Days of mourning. Days of weeping. Days of joy. Days of encouragement. And discouragement.

As we seek to fulfill. The gospel task. Given to us. We do so. In your strength. And do so. For your glory. Help us. The rest of this evening.

Then. To spend time. Alone with you. Spend time. With your people. Perhaps. Spend time. In your word. Spend time. In prayer. And know it was good for us.

To be here this evening. Ask all these things. In and through. And for Jesus. His precious name's sake. Amen. Now turn again.

To sing. In God's word. Again. In the Scottish Psalter. In the great psalm. Of God's. Glorious work. Psalm. 121.

[ 55 : 05 ] Scottish Psalter. Psalm. 121. The question. Of course. In the first verse. Of that psalm. Is. Where do we find our help?

Is it to the eternal. Everlasting hills? Is it to any strength. We can find? No. Our strength. Our safety. Where does it come from? In verse 2. It comes. From the Lord. I too. The hills.

Will lift my eyes. From whence. Do I have come my aid? It's a question. My safety cometh from the Lord. Who heaven and earth have made. The whole of Psalm.

1 to 1. To God's praise. The whole of Psalm. I do have to live my life.

From whence. My hope. His name COMMENTS.

[ 56 : 03 ] He will lift my heart. My hope. His name will do through the earth. of his life who till find scored and stand and some lay for be keep children of all they end ." The Lord be blessed on the Lord's peace.

The Lord be blessed on the Lord's peace. On thy light and the spirit, the moon by night is our lost light.

Now yet the sun hided. The Lord shall keep thy soul, he shall bring his heaven, his love, all earth.

Heaven, so and glad, glory, the standard. God, keep forever.

In the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you now and forevermore. Amen.

[ 58 : 09 ]    Amen.