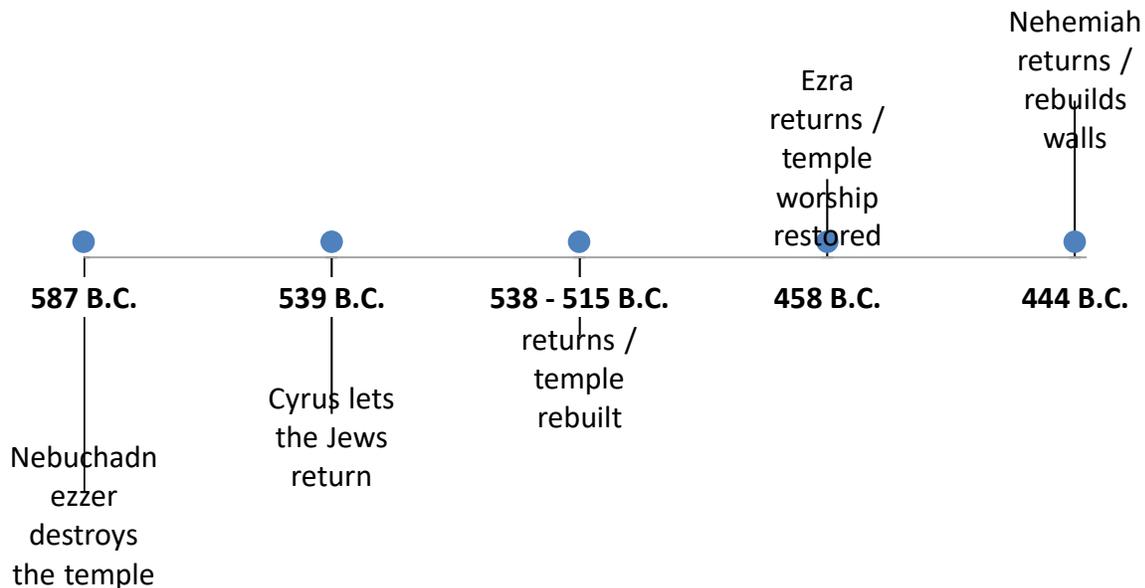


Doing a Great Work: Praying for a Great Work

Introduction

Timeline



Ray C. Stedman: Nehemiah is the story of the **rebuilding** of the walls of Jerusalem

Date	Lesson	Passage	Speaker
March 3	Praying for a Great Work	Nehemiah 1	Jim Fleming
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March 17	Participating in a Great Work	Nehemiah 2:17-20	Jim Fleming
March 24	Performing a Great Work	Nehemiah 3-6	Jim Fleming

Who, What, Where, When, Why

Who: **Nehemiah**. Wikipedia: Traditionally, the author of this book is believed to be Nehemiah himself. There are portions of the book written in the first person (**Nehemiah 1-7; 12:27-47; 13**), but there are also portions of it in which Nehemiah is spoken of in the third person (**Nehemiah 8-10**).

What: David Guzik: Some one thousand years after the time of Moses; some four hundred years before the birth of Jesus, the nation of Israel and the Jewish people were in a desperate state. Their nations had been destroyed—first, the northern Jewish nation of Israel, then the southern Jewish nation of Judah. The city of Jerusalem had been completely conquered by the Babylonians, and the once-glorious temple of Solomon had been destroyed. When the Babylonians conquered Jerusalem, they deported almost everyone from the city and the region—for some seventy years, Jerusalem was a ghost town. . . . When the Jews were deported to Babylon, they began to make homes for themselves there—they settled down, and many still followed the God of their Fathers, but they did it

from Babylon, with no desire to return to the land God had promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Some of these faithful Jews were raised up to places of prominence in the governments they were deported to. . . . But after 70 years of captivity in Babylon, they were given the opportunity to return to their homeland, the Promised Land. Out of the some two or three million Jews deported from the land, only 50,000 decided to return to the Promised Land. . . . But they did return, and in the days of Ezra, they rebuilt the temple and laid a spiritual foundation for Israel once again. But fifteen years after the book of Ezra ended . . . some 150 years after the city of Jerusalem was destroyed, the walls of the city of Jerusalem were still in rubble. It wasn't that people before hadn't tried to rebuild the walls. In [Ezra 4:6-23](#), we see that some 75 years before, they had tried to rebuild the walls, but were stopped by their enemies. No one thought this obstacle could be overcome, so the walls lay in ruin and the people stayed in trouble.

Where: Shushan and [Jerusalem](#)

When: +/- 444 B.C. (Herodotus, Hippocrates, Plato, and Socrates were all on the scene at this time)

Why: Ray C. Stedman: This book is also the story of the restoring of a [people](#) from ruin and despair to a new walk with God. *Explore the Book* by J. Sidlow Baxter: There is no winning without working and warring. There is no opportunity without opposition. There is no 'open door' set before us without there being many 'adversaries' to obstruct our entering it. Whenever the saints say, 'Let us arise and build,' the enemy says, 'Let us arise and oppose.'"

Obviously, this entire series is one big promo for Easter at Coolidge (EAC). At each of your tables are Lego pieces. I asked my son to pick out 60 pieces—big pieces, small pieces, regular pieces, and irregular pieces to give to you as part of his offering today. He was thrilled to give his Legos away so you could see how you fit in this great work. As we go through today's lesson, look at the pieces and see if you see yourself. We will talk more about them at the end.

Nehemiah 1

1 The words of Nehemiah [Jehovah comforts] **the son of Hachaliah.**

It came to pass in the month of Chislev [the ninth month ~ Nov/Dec], **in the twentieth year, as I was in Shushan** [lily—the book of [Esther](#) occurs in Shushan ([Esther 1:1-2](#))] **the citadel** [palace], **2 that Hanani one of my brethren came with men from Judah; and I asked them** [[Warren Wiersbe: Some people prefer not to know what's going on, because information might bring obligation](#)] **concerning the Jews who had escaped, who had survived the captivity** [the remnant], **and concerning Jerusalem.** [[Josh Hunt: Godly people, at times, look for trouble. They look for problems that God can use them to solve. They don't burry their heads in the sand. They expose themselves to the pain that is in the world.](#)] **3 And they said to me, "The survivors** [the remnant] **who are left from the captivity in the province are there in great distress and reproach** [taunted]. **The wall of Jerusalem is also broken down, and its gates are burned** [burned and left desolate] **with fire."** [[Easy English: The wall would have large gates. During the day, these gates were open. Traders and travelers could enter the city. And they could go to the market. But by night, the guards closed the gates. Then, nobody could enter. And the city would be safe.](#)]

4 So it was, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept [to weep bitterly—the Hebrew is pronounced, baw-KAW], **and mourned for many days**; [Terry Bolden: His grief at the hearing of the walls and gates being broken and burned doesn't translate in our culture. This would be the equivalent of us being homeless. Many in their day didn't have their own home, but . . . walls and a gate . . . were very basic needs.] **I was fasting** [abstaining from food] **and praying** [interceding: praying on behalf of someone else] **before** [the face of] **the God of heaven**. [Ray C. Stedman: You will never build the walls of your life until you have first become greatly concerned about the ruins. Josh Hunt: What kinds of situations move you as the situation in Jerusalem moved Nehemiah? Nehemiah 2 says Nehemiah prayed for four months, so either the words we read here are a summary of Nehemiah's actual prayers or he prayed this every day. What was the last thing you prayed four months for?]

5 And I said: "I pray, LORD [Yahweh] **God of heaven, O great and awesome** [fearful, awe-inspiring] **God, You who keep** [guard] **Your covenant and mercy** [chesed] **with those who love You and observe Your commandments,** **6 please let Your ear be attentive and Your eyes open, that You may hear** [grant, agree to] **the prayer of Your servant which I pray** [intercede] **before You now, day and night, for the children of Israel Your servants, and confess the sins** [the root of Old Testament word for sin is based in the concept of 'missing the way' or 'making a wrong turn'—think, *Pilgrim's Progress*, by John Bunyan] **of the children of Israel which we have sinned against You**. [Amy Prater: What's that? Nehemiah's confessing for himself and his people? Yet, I seem to want to separate from society so I don't have to take credit for those other crazy Americans.] **Both my father's house and I have sinned** [Nehemiah does not exempt himself]. **7 We have acted very corruptly** [the Hebrew verb is repeated here for emphasis in two different tenses] **against You, and have not kept** [guarded—the same thing Nehemiah said God guarded in [Nehemiah 1:5](#)] **the commandments** [things **ordered** to be done], **the statutes** [**limits** or boundaries], **nor the ordinances** [judicial **decisions**] **which You commanded Your servant Moses.** **8 Remember, I pray** [Is it OK to ask God to remember? Yes! [Psalm 119:49](#)], **the word that You commanded Your servant Moses, saying, 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations; 9 but if you return** [turn back] **to Me, and keep** [guard] **My commandments and do them, though some of you were cast out** [thrown out, banished] **to the farthest part** [end] **of the heavens, yet I will gather** [gather together] **them from there, and bring them** [lead them in, carry them in, bring it to pass] **to the place which I have chosen as a dwelling** [settling down place] **for My name** [name, reputation, fame, glory].'¹ [See [Leviticus 26:33-46](#), [Deuteronomy 4:25-27](#), and [Deuteronomy 28:64](#) for the scripture Nehemiah was referencing.] **10 Now these are Your servants and Your people, whom You have redeemed** [ransomed] **by Your great power, and by Your strong hand.** [Justin Harness: How awesome if our leadership from President Obama down were to call out to God in such a way?] **11 O Lord** [Adonai], **I pray, please let Your ear be attentive to the prayer of Your servant, and to the prayer of Your servants** [perhaps there were others praying with Nehemiah?] **who desire** [delight, take pleasure in] **to fear Your name; and let Your servant prosper** [succeed] **this day** [David Guzik: If you don't need to desperately pray to accomplish your vision, your goal isn't big enough. . . . This is a prayer of a man of action, not a sideline critic. Nehemiah does not pray "God, make it all better" or, "God, get someone moving on this problem"; instead, his prayer is "God, use me to make it better."], **I pray, and grant him mercy** [compassion] **in the sight** [face] **of this man."** [Does this prayer differ from the average prayer you hear? If so, how?]

For I was the king's cupbearer [literally, 'one who gave him to drink']. [Jonathan Prater: God can use us or put us in jobs/relationships/networks to get His work accomplished (just like Daniel, Esther, and Nehemiah). Nehemiah did not know about **Ephesians 3:20**, but he knew that God used people to accomplish His purpose. **Ephesians 3:20: Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us** (notice the 'in us' at the end).]

Look at your Lego block again. Do you know what your calling is? If you do not, try the prayer that Nehemiah prays for God to use him—that just might get you started. Volunteer for something at EAC—just get engaged. The worst thing that could happen is that you find that one area is not your calling. However, you might just find your calling—and that would be a great work of God.

Apply (So what is the point?)

1. Communication is part of the work (Hanani and the brethren came to tell Nehemiah about the need)
2. Prayer is part of the work (Nehemiah worked for months in prayer)
3. Volunteering is part of the work (Nehemiah included himself as an offering to be part of the solution; story of Andy Stanley volunteering for a life of ministry)

Personalize (Now what do I do?)

1. Communicate **EAC** (tell someone today)
2. Pray for **EAC** (pray today)
3. Volunteer for **EAC** (sign up today)

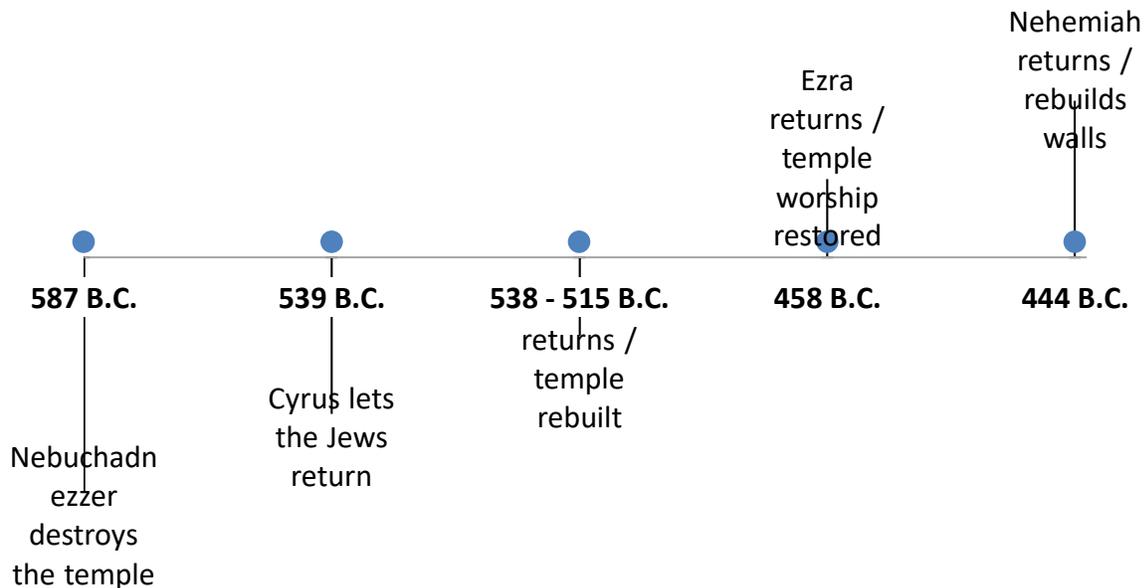
Sermon blanks

- I. **Reverencing** God
 - A. His **person**
 1. **Commitment** to God
 - a. Not a **religion**
 - b. But a **relationship**
 2. **Character** of God
 - a. **General** revelation
 - b. **Special** revelation
 - B. His **Plan**
 1. Covenants – the **blessings**
 2. Commandments – the **judgments**
- II. **Requesting** God
 - A. **Petition** to God
 - B. **Praise** to God
 1. For **redeeming** us
 - a. Great **power**
 - b. Strong **hand**
 2. For **hearing** us

Doing a Great Work: Preparing for a Great Work

Introduction

Timeline



Ray C. Stedman: Nehemiah is the story of the **rebuilding** of the walls of Jerusalem. . . . also the story of the **restoring** of a people from ruin and despair to a new walk with God

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Again, this entire series is one big promo for Easter at Coolidge (EAC). Last week, I gave each of you Legos that Caleb gave to me. I asked you to carry it with you and to think about where you fit in.

Nehemiah 2

Recap of **Nehemiah 2:1-8**: Nehemiah goes before the king after four months of prayer and was visibly sad. The king asked why Nehemiah was sad and Nehemiah tells the king of the poor plight of the Israelites in Jerusalem and of the desolate state of the city walls of Jerusalem. Nehemiah asks the king for help and the king gives Nehemiah massive supplies, letters of passage that guaranteed his safety, and time off from his job.

9 Then I [Nehemiah] **went** [800 miles from Shushan to Jerusalem] **to the governors in the region beyond the River, and gave them the king's letters. Now the king had sent captains of the army and horsemen with me** [additional resources from the king for Nehemiah's protection]. **10 When Sanballat** [strength] **the Horonite** [probably the governor of the Samaritans] **and Tobiah** [Jehovah is good] **the Ammonite official heard of it, they were deeply disturbed** [trembled/quivered] **that a man had come to seek** [to seek in order to find] **the well-being of the children of Israel** [Why would Sanballat and Tobiah be fearful of help for Jerusalem? **Albert Barnes: Compare Ezra 4:4-24; 5:6-17. The revival of Jerusalem as a great and strong city, which was Nehemiah's aim, was likely to interfere with the prosperity, or at any rate the eminence, of Samaria.**].

Ray C. Stedman: Whenever a man like Nehemiah says, "I will arise and build," Satan always says, "Then I will arise and oppose."

The greater the work, the greater the **adversity**. You will know that you are attempting great things for God when you experience great opposition. **Gary Jared: Anytime you are doing something great for God, don't expect everyone to get on the bandwagon and be OK with it.**

One more thing . . . Nehemiah was not shy about naming his opposition. The Holy Spirit could have directed the author of **Nehemiah** to say, 'some others,' but He did not. Nehemiah named those that opposed him. It is good and right to identify those that are opposing the work of God (and God have mercy on your soul if you are a Sanballat or a Tobiah in opposition to a great work).

11 So I came to Jerusalem and was there three days. 12 Then I arose in the night [What did Nehemiah do for three days? Apparently nothing. He had just traveled 800 miles and had been confronted with immediate opposition. He was probably tired physically and mentally. He needed to rest so he **rested**. Gary says it all the time, but sometimes the most spiritual thing you can do is take a nap and/or get some rest.], **I and a few men with me; I told no one what my God had put in my heart to do at Jerusalem; nor was there any animal with me, except the one on which I rode. 13 And I went out by night through the Valley Gate to the Serpent Well and the Refuse Gate** [Adam Clarke: This was the gate on the eastern side of the city, through which the filth of the city was carried into the Valley of Hinnom], **and viewed** [examined] **the walls of Jerusalem which were broken down and its gates which were burned with fire. 14 Then I went on to the Fountain Gate and to the King's Pool, but there was no room** [standing place] **for the animal under me to pass. 15 So I went up in the night by the valley, and viewed** [examined] **the wall; then I turned back and entered by the Valley Gate, and so returned** [This was a tour of the southern part of the city wall—perhaps a half mile to a mile in total. **David Guzik: We deceive ourselves if we only look to what is good. . . . Nehemiah teaches us by example—we must look at the broken down towers, and carefully study what is wrong—but only if we have the heart, the prayer, the vision, the passion to be used of God to set it right.**]. **16 And the officials did not know where I had gone or what I had done; I had not yet told the Jews, the priests, the nobles** [one born free], **the officials** [governors or their subordinates], **or the others who did the work** [Nehemiah was a very patient man with information—he knew how to keep his tongue].

Look at your Lego block again. **Is it damaged at all?** Many times, Legos will be scratched or nicked after wear and tear. Sometimes pieces are broken and require some repair. **What are you doing to insure that when your opportunity for fitting in is available, that your piece is ready? Are you actively working on your piece so that you will be ready? Are you actively looking for opportunities to fit in? Do you know what your calling is and how you can engage the world for God?**

Apply (So what is the point?)

1. Brokenness is all around us
2. Expect opposition in God's work
3. Time spent resting and reflecting is well spent

Personalize (Now what do I do?)

1. Engage with the brokenness (invite people to **EAC**)
2. Rise up and confront opposition (don't tolerate negative speak about **EAC**)
3. Rest and reflect on the brokenness and the possibilities of restoration (**Bob Jones III: The most sobering reality in the world today is that people are dying and going to Hell today**)

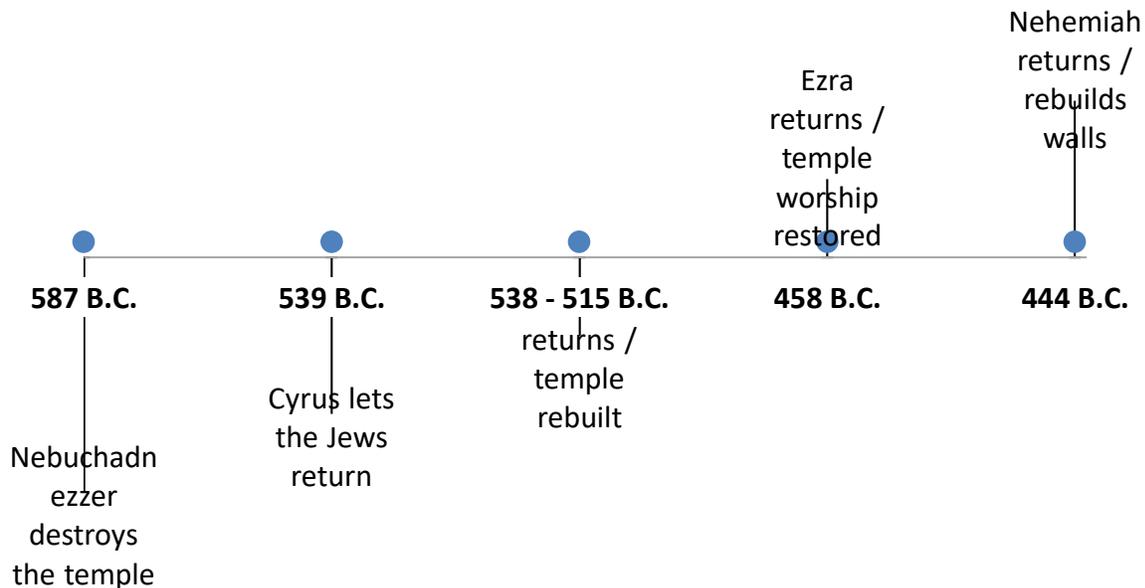
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- I. The **adversity** in a great work (the greater the work the greater the adversity)
 - A. **Getting** there
 1. Set **backs**
 - a. **Distractions**
 - b. **Detours**
 - c. **Discouragement**
 2. Set **ups**
 - a. **Authority**
 - b. **Army**
 - B. **Arriving** there
 1. The **world**
 2. The **flesh**
- II. The **approach** to a great work
 - A. Prepare yourself **physically**
 1. **Burn** out
 2. **Rust** out
 3. **Live** out
 - B. Prepare yourself **mentally**
 - C. Prepare yourself **spiritually**

Doing a Great Work: Participating in a Great Work

Introduction

Timeline



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Review: Nehemiah hears of the issues at home in Jerusalem, gets a sabbatical from work, and goes to help. When he arrives, he immediately is confronted with opposition and with people ready to work.

Nehemiah 2

17 Then I [Nehemiah] **said to them** [the Jews, the priests, the nobles, the officials, and the others who did the work], **“You see the distress** [unhappiness—same word used to describe Nehemiah’s face before the king in **Nehemiah 2**] **that we are in, how Jerusalem lies waste, and its gates are burned with fire. Come** [walk with me—this is a request for movement] **and let us** [this is a request for unity] **build** [rebuild—this is a request for focus] **the wall of Jerusalem, that we may no longer be a reproach** [an

object of scorn—other nations were laughing at them over this].” **[Have you ever been an object of scorn?] 18 And I told them of the hand of my God which had been good upon me** [Nehemiah used what God **had** done to encourage the people to do what God **wanted** done. Publicly recounting the goodness of God encourages others. Reflect often. Many of the psalms are merely recounting the history of God’s goodness/mercy/deliverance.], **and also of the king’s words that he had spoken to me.**

So they [the people and the officials] **said**, **“Let us** [they were **unified** (many times, great works are never accomplished because unity never occurs)] **rise up** [they were **moving** (many times, groups can be unified around the idea that someone else should do the work)] **and build** [rebuild—they were **focused** (many times, without a clear mission, unified movement results in a variety of foci)].” **Then they set** [strengthened, made rigid/firm] **their hands to this good work.** [There was preparation of their hands and practical readying that went on—this was not just a prayer session, this was exercise. **Have you ever shaken someone’s hand that had a weak handshake?** Tell the story of Haddon Robinson’s daughter.

Warren Wiersbe: It takes both the hands of leadership and the hands of partnership to accomplish the work of the Lord. Had Nehemiah stood up and said, “Let’s go to work,” without anyone following, this would have been a failure. If the people had started to work without a common vision and purpose, this would have been a mess. When leadership partners with laity, great things result. **David Guzik: We can just imagine the smile on God’s face as He looked down from heaven and saw the people of God working together in one accord, with one heart, with one mind. God will put us into situations where we must work together, and learn how to lead, how to follow, how to work together with one heart and mind. When was the last time God put you in a situation when you had to work together?** (think . . . marriage)]

19 But [there is almost always a but in Scripture—**opposition** is one of the few constants in the universe] **when Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite official, and Geshem** [rain] **the Arab heard of it** [notice that before it was just Sanballat and Tobiah—now they have more—the opposition is not only still around, it is growing and will try to rain on God’s parade], **they laughed** [mocked] **at us and despised us, and said, “What is this thing** [speech] **that you are doing** [making]? **Will you rebel against the king?”** [They played the patriotism card against Nehemiah—but Nehemiah rightly knew what true loyalty to King and country was. **David Guzik: Opposition is always difficult; but when it comes from brothers, it is then mixed with the pain of betrayal as well. Ray C. Stedman: It is the opposition that makes the players dig in and fight through.** There will be many things that do not go right over the next 14 days. When they do not go right, see them as opportunities to dig in and fight through.]

Theodore Roosevelt (from his speech at the Sorbonne, Paris, France): It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood, who strives valiantly; who errs and comes short again and again; because there is not effort without error and shortcomings; but who does actually strive to do the deed; who knows the great enthusiasm, the great devotion, who spends himself in a worthy cause, who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement and who at the worst, if he fails, at least he fails while daring greatly. So that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory nor defeat.

20 So I [Nehemiah] answered [turned my speech to] them, and said to them, “The God of heaven Himself will prosper us [make us successful]; therefore we His servants will arise and build, but you have no heritage [territory, portion] or right [righteousness] or memorial in Jerusalem.” [Nehemiah told them that they would have no land rights going forward. In case you want to know how significant a deal this is, one of the reasons those genealogies are in the Scriptures is to establish land rights. This was a huge deal. In essence, Nehemiah told them, “You do not **belong.**”]

Matthew Henry: Nothing is a greater vexation to the enemies of good people, who have misrepresented them to princes as turbulent, and factious, and not fit to live, than to see them stand right in the opinion of their rulers, their innocency cleared and their reproach rolled away, and that they are thought not only fit to live, but fit to be trusted.

Apply (So what is the point?)

1. Be encouraged by what God has done (and remind others)
2. Opposition will be relentless and growing
3. Join together to do the great work

Personalize (Now what do I do?)

1. Tell others about your past positive experiences with **EAC**
2. Encourage others that are facing opposition as we get closer to **EAC**
3. **Winston Churchill: Never, never, never give up**

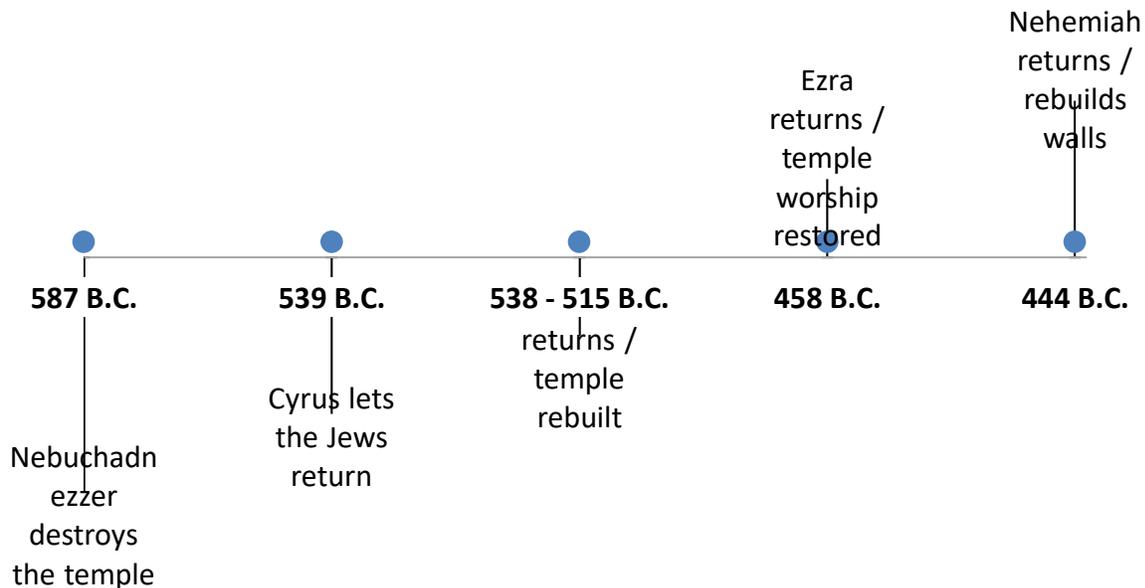
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- I. These are the **facts**
 - A. There is a **work** for **we**
 1. There is **physical** work
 2. There is **public** work
 - a. What is our **reputation**
 - b. How are we **perceived**
 - B. There is a **word** to **me**
 1. From the **Lord**
 2. From the **leaders**
- II. There are the **faithful**
 - A. They **say** the right thing
 - B. They **do** the right thing
- III. This is the **fight**
 - A. Our **adversaries**
 1. The **world**
 2. The **flesh**
 3. The **devil**
 - B. Our **ally**
 1. The **powerful** God
 2. The **personal** God
 3. The **prospering** God

Doing a Great Work: Performing a Great Work

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Review: Nehemiah hears of the issues at home in Jerusalem, gets a sabbatical from work, and goes to help. When he arrives, he immediately is confronted with opposition and with people ready to work.

Preview of today's text:

Nehemiah 3: Details of the wall being rebuilt section by section and person by person

Nehemiah 4: Opposition arises, progress is made, and defenses are set

Nehemiah 5: Internal debt delays the build and Nehemiah helps them refocus, forgive, and continue

Nehemiah 6: More opposition, Nehemiah is not deterred, and the wall is completed in 52 days

Nehemiah 3

In **Nehemiah 3**, Nehemiah sets out to **document** for posterity and the official records the names and accomplishments of the people who worked on the wall (Warren Wiersbe).

While it may seem boring to us to go through a list of names and which gates and parts of the wall they repaired, remember the words of **Ray C. Stedman: There are many chapters like this in the Scriptures. But that should really encourage us. It means that God has not forgotten *our* names either. He loves to record the names of obscure people.** These types of chapters show us that people matter to God.

Ray C. Stedman: As we compass the walls of Jerusalem, each gate instructs us of the part of our life which needs to be watched, and rebuilt, and repaired.

1 Then Eliashib [God restores] **the high priest rose up with his brethren the priests and built the Sheep Gate** [Ray C. Stedman: This is the gate through which the sheep were brought into the city to be sacrificed at the altar.]; **they consecrated** [set it apart as holy] **it and hung** [set up] **its doors. They built as far as the Tower of the Hundred, and consecrated it, then as far as the Tower of Hananel** [God has favored]. **2 Next to Eliashib the men of Jericho built. And next to them Zaccur** [mindful] **the son of Imri** [eloquent] **built.**

3 Also the sons of Hassenaaah [thorny] **built the Fish Gate** [Albert Barnes: The gate through which fish from the Jordan and the Sea of Galilee entered Jerusalem]; **they laid its beams and hung its doors with its bolts and bars. 4 And next to them Meremoth** [elevations] **the son of Urijah** [Jehovah is my light], **the son of Koz** [thorn], **made repairs** [David Guzik: the word for repairs is the Hebrew word *chazaq*, used 35 times in this chapter alone; it has the idea of strengthening, encouraging, making something strong—principles that have application to far more than material gates and walls]. **Next to them Meshullam** [friend] **the son of Berechiah** [Jehovah blesses], **the son of Meshezabel** [God delivers], **made repairs** [made it stronger]. **Next to them Zadok** [righteous] **the son of Baana** [in the affliction] **made repairs. 5 Next to them the Tekoites made repairs; but their nobles did not put** [lead, carry, bring] **their shoulders to the work of their Lord.**

6 Moreover Jehoiada [Jehovah knows] **the son of Paseah** [limper] **and Meshullam the son of Besodeiah** [with the counsel/in the secret of Jehovah] **repaired the Old** [storage] **Gate** [Sometimes the old paths are the best and we must go back and repair them before we can move forward in our walk—note **Jeremiah 6:16**]; **they laid its beams and hung its doors, with its bolts and bars. 7 And next to them Melatiah** [Jehovah delivered] **the Gibeonite** [little hill; hilly], **Jadon** [thankful] **the Meronothite** [joyful shouter], **the men of Gibeon** [hill city] **and Mizpah** [watchtower], **repaired the residence of the governor of the region beyond the River. 8 Next to him Uzziel** [my strength is God] **the son of Harhaiah** [fear of Jehovah], **one of the goldsmiths** [refiners], **made repairs. Also next to him Hananiah** [God has favored], **one of the perfumers** [ointment-maker], **made repairs** [David Guzik: These men were not trained for this kind of work. . . . The most important ability in the work of the Lord is **availability**; the one with few gifts, with little talent, who has a passion and a drive to see God's work done will accomplish far more than a gifted and talented person who doesn't have they passion and drive to do the Lord's work.]; **and they fortified** [repaired] **Jerusalem as far as the Broad** [Wide] **Wall. 9 And next**

to them **Rephaiah** [healed of Jehovah] **the son of Hur** [hole], **leader of half the district of Jerusalem, made repairs.** **10** Next to them **Jedaiah** [praised of Jehovah] **the son of Harumaph** [split-nose] **made repairs in front of his house. And next to him Hattush** [assembled] **the son of Hashabniah** [whom Jehovah regards] **made repairs.**

11 Malchijah [my king is Jehovah] **the son of Harim** [dedicated] **and Hashub** [considerate] **the son of Pahath-Moab** [pit of Moab] **repaired another section, as well as the Tower of the Ovens** [fire pots]. **12** **And next to him was Shallum** [retribution] **the son of Hallohesh** [whisperer], **leader of half the district of Jerusalem; he and his daughters** [Nehemiah and Paul both note the women who assisted them in ministry—Nehemiah here and Paul in [Philippians 4:3](#)] **made repairs.**

13 Hanun [gracious] **and the inhabitants of Zanoah** [cast off] **repaired the Valley Gate** [[TalkJesus.com](#): This gate led to two main valleys that defined Jerusalem geographically and historically. The Hinnom Valley separated Mount Zion from the Hill of Evil Counsel and the, “plain of Rephaim” to the south. . . . The second valley was called the Kidron, which means, “turbid, dusky, gloomy”]. **They built it, hung its doors with its bolts and bars, and repaired a thousand cubits** [slightly more than ¼ mile] **of the wall as far as the Refuse** [dung] **Gate.**

14 Malchijah [my king is Jehovah] **the son of Rechab** [rider], **leader of the district of Beth Haccerem** [house of the vineyard], **repaired the Refuse** [dung] **Gate** [The Refuse Gate was the gate through which the city got rid of its garbage]; **he built it and hung its doors with its bolts and bars.**

15 Shallun [retribution] **the son of Col-Hozeh** [all-seeing], **leader of the district of Mizpah** [watchtower], **repaired the Fountain Gate; he built it, covered** [roofed] **it, hung its doors with its bolts and bars, and repaired the wall of the Pool of Shelah** [sent] **by the King’s Garden, as far as the stairs that go down from the City of David.** **16** After him **Nehemiah** [Jehovah comforts] **the son of Azbuk** [strong devastation—this was not Nehemiah the author], **leader of half the district of Beth Zur** [house of the rock], **made repairs as far as the place in front of the tombs of David, to the man-made pool, and as far as the House of the Mighty** [Strong].

17 After him **the Levites, under Rehum** [compassion] **the son of Bani** [built], **made repairs. Next to him Hashabiah** [Jehovah has considered], **leader of half the district of Keilah** [fortress], **made repairs for his district** [literally, in his ‘round’]. **18** After him **their brethren, under Bavai** [my goings] **the son of Henadad** [favor of Hadad], **leader of the other half of the district of Keilah** [fortress], **made repairs.** **19** **And next to him Ezer** [treasure] **the son of Jeshua** [he is saved], **the leader of Mizpah** [watchtower], **repaired another section in front of the Ascent** [going up] **to the Armory at the buttress** [corner post]. **20** After him **Baruch** [blessed] **the son of Zabbai** [pure] **carefully** [burningly] **repaired the other section, from the buttress** [corner post] **to the door of the house of Eliashib the high priest.** **21** After him **Meremoth** [elevations] **the son of Urijah** [Jehovah is my light], **the son of Koz** [thorn], **repaired another section, from the door of the house of Eliashib to the end of the house of Eliashib.**

22 **And after him the priests, the men of the plain, made repairs.** **23** After him **Benjamin** [son of the right hand] **and Hasshub** [considerate] **made repairs opposite their house. After them Azariah** [Jehovah has helped] **the son of Maaseiah** [work of Jehovah], **the son of Ananiah** [Jehovah clouds], **made repairs**

by his house [Easy English: Some people worked on the walls near their own houses. This was a good idea. They did not have far to travel and they could have their meals easily. They could also protect their families.]. **24 After him Binnui** [built up] **the son of Henadad** [favor of Hadad] **repaired another section, from the house of Azariah** [Jehovah has helped] **to the buttress** [corner post], **even as far as the corner.** **25 Palal** [judge] **the son of Uzai** [I shall have my sprinklings] **made repairs opposite the buttress** [corner post], **and on the tower which projects from the king's upper house that was by the court of the prison.** **After him Pedaiah** [Jehovah has ransomed] **the son of Parosh** [flea] **made repairs.**

26 Moreover the Nethinim [helpers assigned to the Levites and priests for service in the sanctuary] **who dwelt in Ophel** [a hill between the Water Gate and the Horse Gate] **made repairs as far as the place in front of the Water Gate toward the east, and on the projecting tower.** [The Water Gate needed **no** repair—just as the Bible (often referred to as the Water of the Word)—needs no repair, as it never breaks down. Ezra reads the Scripture from this gate in **Nehemiah 8.**] **27 After them the Tekoites** [trumpet blast] **repaired another section, next to the great projecting** [sticking out] **tower, and as far as the wall of Ophel** [hill].

28 Beyond the Horse Gate [where the horses would enter the city] **the priests made repairs, each in front of his own house.** **29 After them Zadok** [righteous] **the son of Immer** [he hath said] **made repairs in front of his own house.** **After him Shemaiah** [heard by Jehovah] **the son of Shechaniah** [dweller in Jehovah], **the keeper** [guard] **of the East Gate** [the gate through which many believe Jesus will return], **made repairs.** **30 After him Hananiah** [God has favored] **the son of Shelemiah** [repaid by Jehovah], **and Hanun** [gracious], **the sixth son of Zalaph** [wound], **repaired another section.** **After him Meshullam** [friend] **the son of Berechiah** [Jehovah blesses] **made repairs in front of his dwelling** [room]. **31 After him Malchijah** [my king is Jehovah], **one of the goldsmiths** [literally, the goldsmith's son], **made repairs as far as the house of the Nethinim and of the merchants** [traders], **in front of the Miphkad** [command/inspection] **Gate, and as far as the upper room** [roof chamber] **at the corner.** **32 And between the upper room** [roof chamber] **at the corner, as far as the Sheep Gate, the goldsmiths** [smelters] **and the merchants** [traders] **made repairs.**

Ray C. Stedman: The important truth that emerges is that this is God's design for ministry. God has placed us all strategically where he wants us to be. Your neighborhood, office, or home is where your ministry should be. That is why God put you there.

Nehemiah 4

1 But it so happened, when Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, that he was furious [scorched] **and very indignant, and mocked** [derided—we could spend all day giving examples of believers who were mocked] **the Jews.** **2 And he spoke before his brethren and the army of Samaria, and said, "What are these feeble** [week] **Jews doing? Will they fortify** [repair] **themselves? Will they offer sacrifices? Will they complete it in a day? Will they revive** [quicken] **the stones from the heaps of rubbish—stones that are burned?"** [Note the misinformation here: the gates were burned, not the walls]

3 Now Tobiah the Ammonite was beside him, and he said, “Whatever they build, if even a fox goes up on it, he will break down their stone wall.”

Jamieson, Fausset, Brown: The foxes were mentioned because they were known to infest in great numbers the ruined and desolate places in the mount and city of Zion

Nehemiah begins to pray. **4 Hear, O our God, for we are despised** [held in contempt, see [Psalm 79:12](#)]; **turn their reproach** [taunts, scorn] **on their own heads, and give them as plunder to a land of captivity!** **5 Do not cover** [conceal] **their iniquity** [guilt], **and do not let their sin be blotted out from before You; for they have provoked You to anger before the builders.** [Nehemiah ends praying]

Was it OK for Nehemiah to pray this way?

David Guzik: This prayer seems pretty tough, but prayers in the Psalms are even tougher: Psalm 58:6; 69:25. Can a child of God pray such a prayer? Yes, because they are giving their violent inclinations over to God, and letting Him deal with it!

6 So we built the wall, and the entire wall was joined together [bound] **up to half its height** [they are halfway through with the wall], **for the people had a mind** [heart, inclination, resolution, courage] **to work.**

7 Now it happened, when Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites heard that the walls of Jerusalem were being restored [healed] **and the gaps were beginning to be closed, that they became very** [exceedingly] **angry, 8 and all of them conspired** [bound] **together to come and attack** [wage war] **Jerusalem and create confusion** [disturbances, wandering]. **9 Nevertheless we made our prayer to our God, and because of them we set a watch** [caused to stand firm, appointed, ordained, established] **against them** [in their face] **day and night.** [**Matthew Henry: If we think to secure ourselves by prayer only, without watchfulness, we are slothful and tempt God; if by watchfulness, without prayer, we are proud and slight God; and, either way, we forfeit his protection.**]

10 Then Judah [praised] **said, “The strength of the laborers** [burden-bearers] **is failing** [stumbling], **and there is so much rubbish that we are not able to build the wall.”**

11 And our adversaries [hard pebble] **said, “They will neither know nor see anything, till we come into their midst and kill** [murder, out of control] **them and cause the work** [business] **to cease** [fail].”

12 So it was, when the Jews who dwelt near them came, that they told us ten times [Hebrew euphemism for ‘many’, see [Genesis 31:7, 41](#); [Numbers 14:22](#); [Job 19:3](#)], **“From whatever place you turn, they will be upon us.”**

13 Therefore I positioned men behind the lower parts of the wall, at the openings [literally, bare spots]; **and I set the people** [caused the people to stand] **according to their families** [perhaps he puts them with their families so they will remember who they are defending], **with their swords, their spears, and their bows. 14 And I looked** [inspected], **and arose and said to the nobles** [those born free],

to the leaders [rulers, officials], and to the rest of the people, “Do not be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, great and awesome [literally, fearful; “do not fear man, fear God”]; John Wesley: You think your enemies are great and terrible. But what are they in comparison of God? Especially in opposition to Him?, and fight [engage in war] for your brethren, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your houses.”

15 And it happened, when our enemies heard that it was known to us, and *that* God had brought [broke, frustrated, split] their plot to nothing, that all of us returned to the wall, everyone to his work. [David Guzik: This is the victory. Defending against the attack was not the victory; the people of God would not be at peace and security until the wall was rebuilt. Getting on with the work is the **victory!** When we are under spiritual attack, we can often feel that just enduring the storm is the victory. It isn't! The attack often comes to prevent your progress and work for the Lord. Victory is enduring the attack and continuing the progress and work for the Lord!] **16** So it was, from that time on, *that* half of my servants [boys, youths] worked at construction, while the other half held [displayed] the spears, the shields, the bows, and wore armor; and the leaders [princes] were behind all the house of Judah. **17** Those who built [rebuilt] on the wall, and those who carried [sustained] burdens, loaded themselves so that with one hand they worked at construction, and with the other held [displayed] a weapon. **18** Every one of the builders had his sword girded [tied] at his side [hips] as he built. And the one who sounded the trumpet [shofar, ram's horn] was beside me.

19 Then I said to the nobles [those born free], the rulers, and the rest of the people, “The work [business] is great [numerous] and extensive [broad], and we are separated [divided] far from one another on the wall. **20** Wherever you hear the sound of the trumpet [shofar, ram's horn], rally [assemble] to us there. Our God will fight [wage war] for us [great faith].”

21 So we labored in the work [business], and half of *the men* held the spears from daybreak until the stars appeared [came out]. **22** At the same time I also said to the people, “Let each man and his servant [boys, youths] stay at night in Jerusalem, that they may be our guard [watch] by night and a working party [business] by day.” **23** So neither I, my brethren, my servants [boys, youths], nor the men of the guard [watch] who followed me took [stripped] off our clothes, *except* that everyone took [put] them off for washing [literally, water; could mean for ritual purification, washing, or urinating].

Nehemiah 5

Ray C. Stedman: The Unseen Enemy tries yet another approach. . . . a problem from within.

1 And there was a great outcry of the people and their wives [women are not usually mentioned like this, but two weeks ago we saw the ‘daughters’ building (Nehemiah 3:12) and now they are crying out—everyone was involved] against their Jewish brethren. **2** For there were those who said, “We, our sons, and our daughters are many; therefore let us get grain [wheat, grain, corn], that we may eat and live.”

3 There were also *some* who said, “We have mortgaged our lands and vineyards and houses, that we might buy grain [wheat, grain, corn] because of the famine [hunger].” [Matthew Henry: Foolish, sinful men bring God's judgments upon themselves, and then fret and complain of them.]

4 There were also those who said, “We have borrowed [the Hebrew word for borrow means to join] money [silver] for the king’s tax on our lands and vineyards [Who did they borrow from?]. **5** Yet now our flesh *is* as the flesh of our brethren, our children as their children; and indeed we are forcing [bonding] our sons and our daughters to be slaves [Exodus 21:7], and some of our daughters have been brought into slavery [been subdued]. *It is not in our power* [hand] to redeem them, for other men have our lands and vineyards.” [So far in Nehemiah 5, who is working? Nobody. David Guzik: It isn’t unusual for money problems to create strife and completely disrupt what God wants to do.]

6 And I became very [exceedingly] angry [burned—this will not be the last time] when I heard their outcry and these words. **7** After serious thought [consideration in my mind/heart; Nehemiah obeyed Psalm 4:4], I rebuked [strived with, contended with] the nobles [those born free] and rulers, and said to them, “Each of you is exacting usury [charging interest] from his brother [a direct violation of Deuteronomy 23:19-20—it was OK to loan, not to charge interest].” So I called [appointed] a great [large] assembly [congregation] against them. **8** And I said to them, “According to our ability [sufficiency] we have redeemed [bought] our Jewish brethren who were sold to the nations [Nehemiah had bought back the slaves sold to other nations]. Now indeed, will you even sell your brethren? Or should they be sold to us?”

Then they were silenced [deaf] and found nothing to say. **9** Then I said, “What you are doing [speaking] *is not good*. Should you not walk [live your life] in the fear of our God because of the reproach [taunting] of the nations, our enemies? **10** I also, with my brethren and my servants [boys, youths], am lending them money [silver] and grain [wheat, grain, corn]. Please, let us stop [abandon, let go] this usury [charging interest]! **11** Restore [pay back, an imperative] now to them, even this day, their lands, their vineyards, their olive groves [olive groves weren’t mentioned by the people being oppressed], and their houses, also a hundredth [the custom of the day was to require payment each month, so this would amount to 12% yearly interest] of the money [silver] and the grain [wheat, grain, corn], the new [fresh] wine and the oil [fresh oil, shining oil], that you have charged [lent] them.”

12 So they said, “We will restore *it* [pay it back (making it right)], and will require [seek, ask, desire (keeping it right)] nothing from them; we will do as you say.”

Then I called the priests, and required [caused] an oath from them that they would do according to this promise [speech]. **13** Then I shook [literally, showed the emptiness] out the fold of my garment [probably a pocket—a common behavior to illustrate a decision being made (some think it was a visible means of swearing)—“I am emptying my pockets and they have nothing in them for you”; see Matthew 10:14 for Jesus’ take on this] and said, “So may God shake out [off] each man from his house, and from his property [literally, anything gained from working], who does not perform [raise up] this promise [speech]. Even thus may he be shaken out [shown to be empty] and emptied.”

And all the assembly [congregation] said, “Amen [so be it]!” and praised the LORD. Then the people did according to this promise [speech]. [There are only two Biblical methods of giving a brother or sister financial assistance—giving or loaning without interest]

14 Moreover, from the time that I was appointed [commissioned] to be their governor in the land of Judah, from the twentieth year until the thirty-second year of King Artaxerxes, twelve years, neither I nor my brothers ate the governor's provisions [food]. **15** But the former governors who were before me laid burdens [were heavy] on the people, and took [snatched] from them bread [food] and wine, besides forty shekels of silver. Yes, even their servants [boys, youths] bore rule [domineered, lorded] over the people, but I did not do so, because of the fear of God. **16** Indeed, I also continued [strengthened in] the work [business] on this wall, and we did not buy any land [even though Nehemiah and his men had money and the people did not]. All my servants [boys, youths] were gathered [collected, assembled] there for the work [business].

17 And at my table were one hundred and fifty Jews and rulers, besides those who came to us from the nations around us [see [Isaiah 32:8](#), [Romans 12:13](#)]. **18** Now that which was prepared [done] daily was one ox and six choice [specially selected] sheep. Also fowl were prepared for me, and once every ten days an abundance of all kinds of wine. Yet in spite of this I did not demand [seek, ask, desire] the governor's provisions [food], because the bondage [labor, service] was heavy on this people. [David Guzik: Nehemiah not only did not take when he could have; he gave when he didn't have to.]

19 Remember me, my God, for good [pleasantness, agreeableness], according to all that I have done for this people.

Nehemiah 6

1 Now it happened when Sanballat [strength], Tobiah [Jehovah is good], Geshem [rain] the Arab, and the rest of our enemies heard that I had rebuilt the wall, and that there were no breaks [gaps] left in it (though at that time I had not hung [stood up] the doors in the gates), **2** that Sanballat and Geshem sent [stretched out] to me, saying, "Come [Walk out], let us meet [assemble] together [unified] among the villages in the plain of Ono [vigorous; Ono was 25-30 miles away—an obvious trap and a three day delay in the work (1.5 days there, 1.5 days back; remember too that Jesus was asked to come down from His work on the cross).]" But they thought [devised, calculated] to do me harm [evil].

3 So I sent [stretched out] messengers to them, saying, "I am doing a great [enormous] work [business], so that I cannot come down [sink (to your level)—see [Ecclesiastes 9:10](#)]. Why should the work [business] cease [rest, desist] while I leave [abandon, relax] it and go down [sink] to you?"

4 But they sent [stretched out] me this message [speech] four times, and I answered [returned] them in the same manner [speech].

5 Then Sanballat sent [stretched out] his servant [boys, youth] to me as before [speech], the fifth time, with an open letter in his hand [Jamieson, Fausset, Brown: In Eastern Asia, the Persians make up their letters in the form of a roll about six inches long, and a bit of paper is fastened round it with gum, and sealed with an impression of ink. . . . Letters were, and are still, sent to persons of distinction in a bag or purse, and even to equals they are enclosed—the tie being made with a colored ribbon. But to inferiors, or persons who are to be treated contemptuously, the letters were sent open—that is, not enclosed in a bag. Nehemiah would have recognized this as a disrespectful action.]. **6** In it was written:

It is reported [heard] **among the nations, and Geshem** [rain] **says, that you and the Jews plan** [devise] **to rebel** [revolt]; **therefore, according to these rumors** [speech], **you are rebuilding the wall, that you may be their king.** **7 And you have also appointed** [caused to stand firm] **prophets** [spokesmen, speakers] **to proclaim** [cry out] **concerning you at Jerusalem, saying, “There is a king in Judah!” Now these matters** [speech] **will be reported to the king. So come** [walk out], **therefore, and let us consult** [deliberate, counsel] **together** [in union, in a united way].

8 Then I sent [stretched out] **to him, saying, “No such things** [speech] **as you say are being done, but you invent** [devise—only used negatively in the Bible] **them in your own heart.”**

9 For they all were trying to make us afraid [terrified], **saying, “Their hands will be weakened** [sunk] **in the work, and it will not be done.”**

Now therefore, O God, strengthen [firm up] **my hands.** [Another short prayer by Nehemiah. **Josh Hunt: The best answer to opposition is to keep working]**

10 Afterward I came [entered in] **to the house of Shemaiah** [heard by Jehovah] **the son of Delaiah** [Jehovah has drawn], **the son of Mehetabel** [favored of God], **who was a secret informer** [restrained, shut up]; **and he said, “Let us meet together** [by appointment—this is not traveling together, this is meeting there] **in the house of God, within** [in the middle of] **the temple, and let us close the doors of the temple, for they are coming to kill** [murder, destroy] **you; indeed, at night they will come to kill** [murder, destroy] **you.”**

11 And I said, “Should such a man as I flee [run away]? **And who is there such as I who would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in!”** [Nehemiah knew that **Numbers 18:7** did not allow for this. **Ray C. Stedman: There was an altar of asylum in the temple courtyard to which people who were under threat could flee and be safe, but this man is proposing they actually go into the temple and shut the doors.**] **12 Then I perceived** [recognized, discerned] **that God had not sent** [stretched out] **him at all** [**2 Corinthians 11:13-15** warns us that one of Satan’s devices is to appear to be good and to have those that follow him appear to be good to deceive God’s children. See also **Matthew 7:15**], **but that he pronounced** [spoke, promised] **this prophecy against me because Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him** [Now there is a full-fledged conspiracy]. **13 For this reason he was hired, that I should be afraid and act that way and sin** [miss the path, go the wrong way], **so that they might have cause for an evil** [bad] **report** [reputation, name], **that they might reproach** [defy, taunt] **me.** [**Ray C. Stedman: Do not take everyone’s advice just because they are friendly to you. It may be totally wrong advice. Nothing substitutes for knowledge of the Word of God.**]

14 My God, remember Tobiah and Sanballat, according to these their works [deeds, not the word for business], **and the prophetess** [spokeswoman] **Noadiah** [meeting with Jehovah] **and the rest** [remainder] **of the prophets** [spokesmen—how many were there?] **who would have made me afraid** [terrified].

15 So the wall was finished [complete, at peace—*shalam*] **on the twenty-fifth day of Elul** [the sixth month ~ August/September], **in fifty-two days.** [This had been a problem for over 100 years and the

work was done in less than two months] **16 And it happened, when all our enemies heard of it, and all the nations around** [totally surrounding] **us saw** [inspecting] **these things, that they were very** [exceedingly] **disheartened** [cast down—literally, lying down] **in their own eyes; for they perceived** [recognized, discerned] **that this work** [business] **was done by our God.**

17 Also in those days the nobles [those born free] **of Judah sent** [walked] **many letters to Tobiah, and the letters of Tobiah came to them** [I think this sentence makes more sense without the ‘the letters of’ being added—the implication is that Tobiah had to shore up his base by making the rounds himself and not writing letters to his supporters]. **18 For many in Judah were pledged** [sworn, those who had taken an oath—again, we see how large this conspiracy is] **to him** [literally, an owner], **because he was the son-in-law of Shechaniah** [dweller with Jehovah] **the son of Arah** [traveler], **and his son Jehohanan** [Jehovah is graced] **had married the daughter of Meshullam** [friend] **the son of Berechiah** [Jehovah blesses]. [Matthew Henry: A sinful love leads to a sinful league.] **19 Also they reported his good deeds** [pleasantness] **before me** [in my face], **and reported my words** [speech] **to him. Tobiah sent** [stretched out] **letters to frighten** [terrify] **me.**

So, what was Nehemiah about? It is about you and me. It is about the walls in our lives that need to be built up and the gates that need to be repaired. It is about the process of restoration and how each one of us plays a role.

Apply (So what is the point?)

1. God cares about individuals
2. God remembers individuals and their contributions
3. There is always a job to do in the body of Christ

Personalize (Now what do I do?)

1. Care about individuals and invite them to **EAC**
2. See every person as being able to contribute
3. Find my job and serve as needed/gifted at **EAC**

Sermon blanks

- I. The **placement** of the people
 - A. Serve where you are **gifted**
 - B. Serve where you are **needed**
- II. The **perseverance** of the people
 - A. The **contempt** on the people
 1. They were **taunted**
 2. They were **threatened**
 - B. The **courage** of the people
 1. They **prayed** and **worked**
 2. They **prayed** and **watched**
- III. The **praise** of the people
 - A. They **finished** their **work**
 - B. They **glorified** their **God**