

The city was broken down

Part 1

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Note: This text is a computer generated transcript of the sermon. In some cases it may contain errors.

[00:00:00] Nehemiah 1, 1st verse, the words of Nehemiah, son of Asherah, and it came to pass, in the month of Islam, in the twentieth year, as I was in Shushan, the palace, that Hanani, one of my brethren, came, he and Sodom, men of Judah, and I asked them concerning the Jews that had escaped, which were left for the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem, and they said unto me, the remnant that are left of the captivity, that there in the province, are in great affliction and reproach. The wall of Jerusalem is also broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire.

And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down, and wept, and for certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven.

And let's see the result in the second chapter, because he prayed and his prayer was answered, [00:01:03] and he was able to go to Jerusalem.

The ninth verse of the second chapter, then I came to the governor beyond the river, and gave them the letters. Now the king had sent captains of the army and horsemen with me.

When Samballot the Horonite and Tobiah the servant of the Ammonite heard of it, it grieved them exceedingly that there was come a man to seek the welfare of the children of Israel. So I came to Jerusalem, and was there three days. And I arose in the night, I and some few men with me.

Neither told I any man what my God had put in my heart to do at Jerusalem. Neither was there any beast with me, save the beast that I rode upon. And I went out by night by the gate of the valley, even before the dragon well, and to the down-port, [00:02:01] and viewed the walls of Jerusalem which were broken down, and the gates thereof were consumed with fire. Then I went on to the gate of the fountain, and to the king's pool, but there was no place for the beast that was under me to pass. Then went I up in the night by the brook, and viewed the wall, and turned back, and entered by the gate of the valley, and so have returned.

And the rulers knew not whither I went or what I did, neither had I as yet told it to the Jews, nor to the priests, nor to the nobles, nor to the rulers, nor to the rest that did the work. Then said I unto them, Do you see the distress that we are in?

Hear how Jerusalem lies waste, and the gates thereof are burned with fire. Come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we may be no more a reproach.

Then I told them of the hand of my God which was good upon me, [00:03:05] and also of the king's words that he had spoken unto me.

And they said, Let us rise up and build. So they strengthened their hands for this good work. But when Samaritan, Oronite, and Tobiah the servant of the Ammonite, and Geshem the Arabian heard it, they laughed as to scorn, and despised us, and said, What is this thing ye do? Will ye rebel against the king?

Then answered I them, and said unto them, The God of heaven, he will prosper us. Therefore we his servants will rise and build, that ye have no portion, nor rite, nor memorial in Jerusalem.

Now let us go to the third chapter, the first verse.

Then Eliaship the high priest rose up with his brethren the priests, and they builded the sheep gate, they sanctified it, and set up the doors of it. [00:04:07] Even unto the tower of Beir, they sanctified it unto the tower of Hananiel.

And next unto him builded the men of Jericho, and next to them builded Zachar the son of Imri.

Now let us go to the fourth chapter.

And the first verse.

And it came to pass that when Samhain occurred, that we builded the wall, he was wrong, and took great indignation, and mocked the Jews.

And he spake before his brethren, and the army of Samaria, and said, What do these people Jews? Will they fortify themselves?

Will they sacrifice? Will they make an end in a day? Will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burned? Now Tobiah the Ammonite was by him, and he said, [00:05:03] Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall.

And just the tenth verse.

And Judah said, The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and there is much rubbish, so that we are not able to build the wall.

And lastly in the sixth chapter.

Now it came to pass when Sambalot and Tobiah, and Geshem the European, and the rest of their enemies heard that I had builded the wall, and that there was no breach left therein, though at that time I had not set up the doors upon the gates. Then Sambalot and Geshem sent out to me, saying, Come, let us meet together in some one of the villages in the plain of Ono. But they thought to do me mischief.

And I sent messengers out to them, saying, I am doing great work, so that I cannot come down.

[00:06:05] Why should the work cease whilst I leave it, and come down to you?

Yet they sent unto me four times after this thought, and I answered them after the same manner. And lastly, the fifteenth verse.

So the wall was finished in the twentieth and fifth day of month Elah, in fifty and two days.

And it came to pass that when all their enemies heard thereof, and all the heathen that were about us saw these things, they were much cast down in their own armies, for they perceived that this work was wrought of our God.

May the Lord bless us, our readings of his word.

I am happy, Lord, to speak to you concerning Nehemiah tonight, but I feel that there is so much teaching in this little book, [00:07:02] in the Old Testament, that makes us just where we are today. What a wonderful book it is. And no doubt the beginning of this book is about the year 445 B.C. When we think of the book of Ezra, we remember that there, at the beginning of the book of Ezra, about ninety years previously to this, Cyrus had given the order that the children of Israel, the Jews, could come back to their land. And they came back, and over the years up till Nehemiah went there, there had been about fifty thousand of them that had come back. They had come back to their land. What was the desire of God for his people, firstly, that they should do? Well, you remember that there had been damage done to that city. We've read tonight concerning the walls being broken down, and the gates burned with fire.

But if there was one thing much before God, it was the temple.

And that had been destroyed, hadn't it? [00:08:01] It had been broken down.

And it was God's desire that his people should go back, and that that temple should firstly be built again. Because we must realize that if there is one thing that God would have of his people, he would have them to be worshippers.

There is much made of service today, isn't there? And I would say rightly so, but let's remember that with regard to service and worship, let us get these two things in their right perspective. And it was firstly that God would have before him that these people might worship him in Jerusalem.

And I would feel that at the beginning there was time that was wasted, and then the thought came to them, was given to them by one of God's people, that they were building their own houses. And in building their own houses they said, well, this is not the time to rebuild God's house.

Doesn't that bring the picture down to today [00:09:03] when everybody, it seems almost everybody without exception, got so much thought concerning what they have and what they ought to be occupied with, and that which is concerning God is neglected.

That was the time when they lived in sealed houses and God's house had been left.

Now the time came when happily they set the altar on his bases because that's where worship was to begin. They did not begin with the building, you began and you've done the building, and what a

wonderful building it is. But they set the altar on its bases and then they built the temple.

As they rebuilt the temple there was a lot of time wasted because of hindrances from the enemy, but at last that temple was complete.

And as we think of that temple complete, it was that after that it appeared that very little was done.

[00:10:03] What a sad thing to think that these people had the temple, these people had the place of worship, and yet it was, with regard to the city itself, here it was in ruins as the enemy had left it. The walls were broken down, the gates burned with fire, and it appears that very little people had any care for this. Yes, they had their temple, they had their place to gather to God, they had their altar, but they had little care of the fact that God would have a wall. And God would have gates as well because in that day there were enemies, we've read about them, haven't we? There were enemies around about and God would have a wall and have those ten gates that are mentioned in these chapters here. There aren't twelve gates, but ten are mentioned here. He would have those gates, he would have porters on the gates as well because he was very, very careful who and what came into those gates, into that city [00:11:02] because it was his city and it was his temple.

Just at this moment it appears that there was very little thought concerning this among the people and yet it must have been that there were one or two there, a remnant that had a care for God's things.

And we would think just at this time that there would be one that would be desirous of building the temple, but there was not one at this time. Neither was there one that was in a position so to do. I don't think that there was one in a position to build this temple, this gate and rebuild the walls.

It was at this moment God would choose a man and choose a man that we would not have thought of. When we think of Nehemiah who was away and no doubt almost a thousand miles away from here at this time, you would say, well, that is not the man that God would have to come and rebuild the gates and rebuild the walls again.

[00:12:04] This is not the man that God would have. See where he is and see where he stayed.

Let's remember that during the time from the beginning when they firstly came back, 91 years previously, there were those that had come also later on and yet this man Nehemiah hadn't come. You would have thought, naturally speaking, when you look at this story you would have thought then that this man might have come and he might have come with those people. But I think that we have a lesson here that we do well to take heed to.

This man Nehemiah was the one that came, immediately he heard that there was a service for him to do for God and he wouldn't move before God gave him the authority to move.

So I would say tonight as we think of the man Nehemiah that he is going to do the service for the Lord, [00:13:01] I would think it is an example to us, whatever we do and wherever we go, let us remember that God should be in control of our movements.

It should be concerning us because we are not our own and we are bought with a price, therefore we are to glorify God in our bodies and if we do, we will not be doing our own will, will we?

He waited just where he was and at the opportune moment when he could be of service to the people of God because he had an influence with the king, he was able to do something because of the fact that there he was and the king put him in the command of so much that would help in this great work, it was that he waited to that time and then he arose in service and let's remember that today so often it is that we move here or move there, perhaps our house or perhaps our service, our work, and it is that we give God little thought. [00:14:02] This man waited until he had the word from God and then it was that he began to move. But there were those in Jerusalem that had an exercise in the things of God, not many of them, no doubt, but there were.

When we think of Hananiah and the brethren that came with him, they wouldn't take this journey of almost a thousand miles for nothing, would they?

It was that in turn they were led of God so that this man Nehemiah might know something of the conditions in Jerusalem and he might be prompted to come in that service.

And he comes to his brother Nehemiah and as he comes to his brother Nehemiah, it is almost immediately that Nehemiah asks concerning the city of Jerusalem and concerning the people that were in the city, why did he do that?

Because although he was so far from the people of God, his heart was with them, he had a care for them.

[00:15:04] As I think of the one that was going to be raised up, he was one that was firstly led of God and also he was one that had a care for the people of God. God will not use anyone that has not a care for his people.

Do you remember that the Apostle Paul said concerning young Timothy, I have no man like-minded that would naturally care for your state. He would send him because of the fact that if a person cares for the people of God, it is that that person in love will deal with them and he asks concerning the people of God.

And they tell that tale of woe with regard to the city that the walls are broken down and the gates are burned with fire and immediately it is that Nehemiah sits down.

I think if many of us would have been in that circumstance, we would have sat down because we would have said, [00:16:02] well, what can I do?

You must realize that here, so far from Jerusalem, and here I have a master, the king, I must do his bidding, how can I do anything? I'll sit down.

But he didn't sit down to do that, did he? It wasn't that he sat down, I think it's a word for us today as we would enter into wonderful premises like this, it's not that we're going to sit down. This man sat down firstly and why did he sit down?

Not because he'd drop his hands like people do today and say with regard to the day, well, of course it's a day of small things and what can you expect? How can we do anything?

He sat down to contemplate what he'd heard.

The person, the man of God, the scripture said, shall not make haste. The man of God who's going to be of service for his Lord will be one that will contemplate the work before he gets up to do it.

I know that there's so much rushing concerning service today [00:17:05] and I feel that there's one thing that we miss. If we look into the scripture we see in the New Testament that the Lord Jesus said concerning his servants, he said, come ye after me. Come into my presence, come ye after me and I will make you.

Come into my presence first. And we see how he would bring them into his presence and then send them forth.

And this man here, he sits down firstly to contemplate what he's heard about that city that belonged to God, that city that meant so much to God. And as he contemplated that city and the condition of his brethren it says that he wept.

I wonder why he wept.

Don't you think that at that time he was grieving with God with regard to the circumstances that were prevalent in Jerusalem at the time? Don't you think so?

[00:18:02] Don't you think he firstly, being a godly, being a spiritual man, he grieved with God concerning the condition of his people and concerning that city that meant so much for him and mourned?

As this man mourned it means to me that here was a man who also felt that there was one thing that he must do and he does later on in the book. It says we see concerning him that he takes his place with the people and he owns his sin.

In that chapter we read he said, do you see the distress we are in?

See he wept, he took his place with God and he felt with God, he grieved with God concerning the conditions prevailing.

And do we grieve in that way concerning things that happen today? Or do we say concerning the things that happen, oh well, things must happen in that way? No, but God grieves.

God grieves concerning conditions. God grieves with regard to his people [00:19:02] and we should, if we are spiritual, grieve with him. But on the other hand it says concerning him he mourned and he mourned with the people.

The remnant would mourn concerning the conditions. There would be many that did not mourn but the remnant would mourn concerning the conditions. They would take their place in humility before God. Do you remember Isaiah writing that wonderful prophecy of Isaiah? And do you remember those first chapters where he pronounced woes on so many people until he got into the presence of the Lord? And then it says concerning him that he comes from the pulpit down among the people and says woe is me.

And this man Nehemiah would take this position, he would mourn with the people of God and then

he'd fast, and then he'd fast.

At that time this fast would mean much to him and in a few moments time we will see how it did mean much to him [00:20:03] but this fasting meant that he would leave no stone unturned so that his mind, his whole body, might be exercised concerning those people and concerning how they could be helped. And so he mourns, he fasts and then he prays and then he prays and not before because I think that very often we can be found on our knees praying when the prayer has little in it because we've had no desire to get before the Lord and weep and mourn concerning conditions and fast and then pray.

There was one thing that he, it does not say that he did here but I'm certain that he did do. He not only wept and mourned and fasted and prayed but there was one thing that he must do with regard to the work and that is he must plan.

Now any planning that we do with regard to the service of the Lord [00:21:01] must be done in his presence.

Planning can't be done in committees as we think of a business that is run on committees that are formed and they would plan various things that would be for the benefit of the company. We can't do that, we can't do that.

It must be that if there's any planning with regard to our service it's something that's done in the presence of the Lord and prompted by the Spirit of God, and prompted by the Spirit of God. So here we see him in this deep exercise and it was in this deep exercise for almost four months.

And as he went in and out in front of the king it was that on one occasion the king looked at him and he queries him with regard to his health and he speaks to him with regard to his sad countenance and he'd never been like that before.

And then he says, for what do you request me?

He told him concerning the city and he says, [00:22:01] for what do you request me? And it says a wonderful thing. He prayed to God and said to the king. Now that was a short prayer, wasn't it? That's shorter than a lot of prayers we hear, isn't it? But there was one thing concerning it. I feel that he could not have altered the expression of his face because he was before the king, but his heart went up to God. His heart went up to God for guidance and for leading just at that moment because he knew it depended upon God and God alone whether he would be able to go and whether there would be that forthcoming for the work that he was to do. So he prays to God and he says to the king and he tells the king how long he's going to be away. He tells the king what he would desire for the service that he would have there at Jerusalem. So we see by that that he planned, hadn't he? He planned in the presence of the Lord and he's able just at this moment to give the answer to the king. [00:23:04] I feel that never should we do anything slipshod for the Lord Jesus Christ.

Never should it be in any of our service for him that we should do it in a slipshod way. Then it is that he makes his journey to Jerusalem.

He comes to Jerusalem and he stays there three days.

I wonder why he stays three days.

But I feel that I would go back to the word that I spoke a moment ago. The man of God must not make haste and as he was found now at Jerusalem there it was three days of exercise and three days of prayer because of that which was before him. Here was a great work before him. Here were the people he hadn't spoken to them with regard to the work that he was going to do but he was here, he'd come here in faith and therefore he was there three days and then it says concerning him that he went out in the night.

[00:24:02] While men slept.

While it was that those people that were in the city that were so silent with regard to the work that they ought to do then it was while they slept that he went out.

But I think that he went out for another reason at night and that was he hadn't come as a calming critic.

He hadn't come to this city as a calming critic to criticise everything that was there. If there's one thing that's a hindrance to the work of the Lord it is criticism, it is criticism.

And this man would not criticise.

As we see him and as we see the words that he speaks concerning the ruin there, it is that he's in this ruin. It's as much him as those that are there. You see the distress we are in. And so here's a man in all humility.

He waits those three days and he goes out into the night. And as he goes out into the night we see concerning him [00:25:01] that he goes not on the top of the wall but he goes through the valley gate to inspect the wall.

Now I like to think that that chapter that speaks of all the ten gates the next chapter speaks of those gates and they have a considerable meaning.

And when I think of the valley gate mentioned there it speaks to me of that which firstly characterised the Lord Jesus Christ in all perfection and that which should characterise us and that's humility. Here was a man that was going to be a straight servant for the Lord but he was one that was to be clothed with humility and therefore we see him go out and he goes by the valley gate and he goes round the city and as he goes round the city he sees all the damage, all that that's contrary to the mind of the Lord and then it is that he comes back. Where does he come back to? It says concerning him he comes back and enters in through the valley gate.

[00:26:02] It is that in humility he comes back.

Now the time has come that he should speak to the people with regard to a work, a great work that he would have them to do. There they had their temple. There the worship in that way had been restored but there was work for them to do.

And how would it be possible for them to do this work and how would it be possible for him to be in

service for them and also to be the one, the ter-shapper as he calls himself that would tell them what to do in the service of the Lord. Well we see this man in humility, he draws them together to himself and he firstly does not in any way make little of the circumstances.

You see what a terrible condition we're in.

As we look at the gates, as we look at the walls how much damage we are in, how much damage there is.

[00:27:03] The evil case that we are in.

Now you say Nehemiah but you came from the palace, you've come a thousand miles almost, it's nothing to do with you. Yes, this honour that was to the name of the Lord is a thing that we take upon ourselves. We don't point out one brother or a group of brothers or a group of sisters in a certain place and say the blame is with them. We say we, we take the blame, we take our place in humility before the Lord because that's the way he's going to bless and he's not going to bless in any other way. If it is that we humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God then he will exalt us but if we feel in ourselves that blame for anything is connected with one person or one group of persons and not ourselves we're looking at it in the wrong way.

As we look into Nehemiah 9 we'll see a prayer there. [00:28:04] He owns his part in this departure.

If we see Ezra 9 we see a prayer there. Ezra owns his part in the departure.

If we see Daniel 9 that's a prayer and we see there he takes his part in the departure and we all must take our part if there's any departure from the Lord. But not only would he bring before them the sad case that they were in but there was one thing that there was going to be. He would encourage them.

He told them of the hand of his God that was good upon him.

Well that's a wonderful thing when we know the hand of God is good upon us and also the words of the king.

He would encourage them.

So he brings them right down to the sad condition they're in then he encourages them and then it is that they say let us arise and build.

They wouldn't have said it if he had gone there as a critic, would they? [00:29:04] But now the time has come when he speaks to them in this way, he wins them in this way, in the way that he speaks, in the great encouragement that he gives and then they say let us arise and build.

I haven't much time to speak on this subject so I will go over a few things with regard to this building.

They began the work but where did they begin?

It isn't in scripture that we can build and begin a service in any way that we like.

But if you look into that third chapter you'll see that Elijah began the service and he began at the sheep gate.

Now if you remember, if I remember rightly, in the fifth chapter of the Gospel of John that's the place where the Lord Jesus Christ met that man, that man that couldn't walk, that man that had been there so long. That's the place where he was met. [00:30:02] And after that he was one that was healed of the Lord. And that's the place where we meet the Lord Jesus Christ primarily. We meet him and know him to be our sacrifice for our sin.

We know him as the one that died for our sin on the cross. You know, I know of cases with regard to the service of the Lord where it's been that they've needed a Sunday school teacher and they've looked at a certain person and said, well, shall we have that person? And it's been said, well, do they belong to the Lord Jesus? That's the thing that must be gone into first. If there's going to be any service it's got to be done by a person that really belongs to him. And that's remembered that firstly it says that they began at the sheep gate.

That's where we began when we came to the Lord Jesus Christ. I know it's being a little light, but we sing in the Sunday school that Calvary's cross is where we begin when we come as a sinner to Jesus.

[00:31:03] But where did they end that work? If you look at the end of that third chapter you'll see that they ended at the sheep gate.

And I have a truth there, brethren, that I think that we should never get away from. The very fact that as we think of the death of the Lord Jesus Christ for our sin on the cross, never let us get away from the cross.

And let it be the uppermost thing in our minds and lives, as a dear brother was speaking to me earlier a little while ago, that we don't get away from the remembrance of the Lord Jesus Christ. Let that remembrance be so fresh that as we come before him on Lord's Day morning we don't come so that we might be reminded.

I have heard people say concerning the remembrance of the Lord, well, he knew our hearts and our poor failing hearts and this will give us to remember. I don't think that's so.

[00:32:02] If it is that during the week we have so much occupation of other things apart from himself that we have to come together to be reminded of this, where are we, brethren?

On the other hand, when we think of the man in the Old Testament Scripture in the second of Leviticus, who would have something that he prepared at home, that meal offering that he prepared at home so that he came and he was able to give it, it would show some exercise concerning what happened during the week. Don't we also see in the 26th chapter of Leviticus that there was the man that brought his basket of first fruits and laid beside the altar? We've got to remember that these things are so. It's not to bring our poor hearts back to the remembrance of the Lord Jesus Christ, bring our hearts back to what he did. Let it be that during the week, as we think of that word that we have before us daily as we read it, [00:33:04] let it be that we come forth with poor hearts and let us never go away, get away from the cross. They began at the sheep gate and they ended at the sheep gate and never let us get away from the cross. Now there were all kinds of workers that were working

there, weren't there, and if we had read down that third chapter we would have found that there were all kinds of people from different walks of life that were working together, but all working together in unity.

There were the goldsmiths and there were the princes, there were the priests as we mentioned a little while ago, there were all kinds of people and there as they were working they were working all together. Now as we think of the assemblies, don't you think that we are diverse, the one from another in our make-up? It is in our business, it is in our make-up, we are diverse, the one from another, [00:34:01] and yet I read concerning them that as they worked and next to him and next to him and next to him everybody was working together in unity.

If there is one thing that must be in the service of the Lord there must be unity.

We will never have uniformity, will we? And I don't think it is a good thing to strive for. Should I come to this meeting and you allow me to do and to tell you what to do, as I think it to be, what a horrible meeting it would be.

It would be that I would be dictating to you, there might be uniformity if you obey, but there wouldn't be unity, would there? And yet in the service of the Lord it must be that with regard to us that as we see in that chapter, the third chapter of Nehemiah, that it must be next to him and next to him and next to him, let it be in that way that we serve the one with another.

[00:35:02] There in that chapter we see in the first verse that there was a wonderful man that began the work, Eliashim, the priest, he began the work, and there it was that he put the doors there and the gates, but there was one thing that he didn't do, because we've got to look into this to see that there's instruction for us. And this first man who put his gate there, the sheep gate, he put no bolts or bars with regard to the gate.

And later on, about the twelfth or thirteenth chapter, he is the man that lets Tobiah in, he is the man that lets Tobiah into the house of the Lord. How dangerous it is if we are careless with the things of the Lord. Then, in another way, and a more wonderful way, we see there that there were the men of Jericho, and when we think of them, how they remind us of ourselves in this work, because the men of Jericho had come up into this place of blessing, [00:36:01] and they were those that were connected with the place of a curse, Jericho, the place of a curse. And now they are brought together, the men of Jericho, and now they are in the city, and now they are joined with the others of the workers there, and they are working in that place of blessing, they are brought into that place of blessing.

And then, as I think there are two places, I think the fifth verse and the twenty-seventh verse, we see the Techarites mentioned.

And as we see those Techarites mentioned, we see firstly that they were going to serve the Lord, but their nobles put not their necks to the work of their Lord.

It was that with regard to the Techarites, as they had their service to do, there were those concerning them that they might have looked up to that were no example to them at all, because they hadn't got the will to work.

Therefore I would say that in this dark day [00:37:02] we are not to look at others, thinking that although

they may be in a position that we can follow them in what they would do or not do. It is that these men continued in the service, and we will see in the twenty-seventh verse, if you look into your chapter, you'll find that those same men built another piece, they took on another piece. It was that they had worked so well, disregarding those that might have helped them, they worked so well, so that they were able to go to another part of the city, and there they worked in such a way that that service was done by them in a very suitable way to guard.

So this work was going to continue, wasn't it? And so no doubt the work will continue in this building, but let's remember that there's something else that we must look upon, and that is the fact that here was a service begun of the law, and here it was that the enemy had noticed the service had begun, [00:38:05] and he would not let it alone. And let's remember that if you're going to do service in this hall, it's going to be that the enemies come. And here we see that with regard to Sam Ballat, and Tobiah the Ammonite, and Geshem the Arabian, they look upon the work that these men are doing, and they laugh them to scorn.

They laugh them to scorn.

Now we don't like to be laughed at, do we? We don't like to be scorned, but when we think of this man Nehemiah, he was a man that was so humble in himself that this scorning made no effect upon him.

But I will say concerning the enemy laughing us to scorn, he can laugh us to scorn, and there is a time when the enemy does laugh us to scorn. It is that when he sees so few attending a prayer meeting, where there are those that could be there, [00:39:01] and are not there, and it might be left to just a few, he laughs us to scorn.

He looks into the meeting and he sees a gospel meeting going on, and as he sees that gospel meeting going on, and as he sees the end come, there might be those exercised concerning their position before the Lord, and then everybody gets up and has a gossip, and he laughs us to scorn. He laughs us to scorn.

When it is that there are those that are touched with the word of the gospel, and they look round and see everybody talking as though the gospel didn't mean a thing after it had been preached, then it is that the enemy can laugh us to scorn.

And so we see that that's the thing that he did firstly. And then, as they began to live, and as they got on a little, the enemies come to see them, and as they come to see them and see the work that they had done, then it is that Tobiah laughs at them, and he says, if only a fox comes up and leans upon that wall, [00:40:04] it will break down their stone wall, and fuck the work that they were doing. They would have been less doing it.

And I have thought that sometimes the enemy has said to me, and I think he says it to you as well, do you think that what you do for the Lord is going to make any difference in this world? And it might be said to those who are here tonight that in this meeting, in the coming part of this meeting, the enemy will say, he'll laugh and say, do you think that what you're going to do is going to make any difference in the service of the Lord, going to make any difference in this world? The work was carried on.

They took no notice of the enemy. They prayed, and if you look into this book, I think it is that ten

times it says that Nehemiah prayed. Nehemiah prayed.

And then we look into the fourth chapter, and as we look into the fourth chapter there, we see something else.

[00:41:02] We see that it says, the strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and there is much rubbish. Poor Judah, I don't know, I've never come to the conclusion that he's a man or he's a tribe.

It says, Judah says, the strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and there is much rubbish. And if you think of what he really meant, it was this. They were taking out the stones from the rubbish and rebuilding the wall, and when they had those great heaps of rubbish, they had to go round those heaps of rubbish, and they had to get the stones through to rebuild again. And it says, the strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and there's much rubbish.

And if that is not up-to-date teaching, brethren, I don't know what is.

When we think of the day in which we live, there's so much rubbish, so much rubbish that comes into the believer's life.

[00:42:01] I won't say that it's in the life of every believer, but if there's one thing that's a hindrance in the meetings, it is rubbish, it is rubbish. Rubbish can come in our home, it can come in our bookcase, it can come in our life, and it can come in our assembly. And when we think of the rubbish that we can be occupied with during the week, don't you think that it has the effect that it had on Judah here when he says the strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed? Isn't it something that we so often hear that a brother says that he comes home and he's so very tired that he goes off to sleep when he's reading his Bible? Rubbish, rubbish, and tiredness, weariness go together, and we must think of that.

But lastly, in the sixth chapter of this book, here it was that the enemy came in in another way.

He came in in another way. Here it was that as the enemy continued to look at the work that was going on [00:43:02] and not able to do anything about it, he comes up and he feels, well, there's one thing that we can do, let's bring him away from the work. And he sends a letter to Nehemiah and his helpers, and he says, won't you come down to me? Won't you come down to me? And as I think of this, I feel that he meant that he was not to be found there, but he was to compromise.

I often think, as I think of this scripture, of that young prophet in the 13th chapter of the first book of Kings. There was a young man that was doing a great work for the Lord, and it might have meant a revival. Do you remember that he went to Bethel? He cried against the altar, and he began a work there for the Lord, and he was told to leave Bethel and go straight away again and not have anything to do with anybody there? The king comes out to him and he says, no, I can't come home to you. And then an old prophet comes out to him, [00:44:01] and as he comes out to him, and perhaps he was weary, the old prophet says, won't you come home? And he goes home.

He might have thought in his own mind, well, after all, perhaps I have been a bit too hard.

The point is, I ought to compromise a little and go down with this old prophet. But that which might have been a revival turned out to a catastrophe because of the fact that that young man died. He

should have been obedient to the will of God, and this man here was obedient to the will of God. As we see nearby here, the man tells him to come down, and if there's one thing that is a hindrance to us today, it's that thought concerning compromise. There is a word that used to have its true meaning years ago, but I feel that people take hold of it in the wrong way today, and if you abide by the scripture, they'll tell you, well, you're too legal. I don't think that we are too legal. We have to go by what the scripture says, and we're not to compromise with the world as it is today.

[00:45:05] When I think of our Lord Jesus Christ being found in this world, the one that was the holy and the harmless and the undefiled, the separated from sinners, what do we see concerning him? He could show his friendship, he could show his love to all that were here, but he was the separated from sinners. He was the one that kept himself in that position, and when we think of ourselves, let's remember, the old enemy will say to us, come down, but it's not for us to come down. He says here, giving the right answer, I am doing a great work, and let's remember that we are doing a great work, and let's remember that that work will be hindered, that work will be destroyed if it is that we compromise and come down to the level of this world. So we came to the 15th verse of that chapter, the 6th chapter, and we saw those wonderful words, so the war was finished in 52 days, [00:46:02] and the enemy were cast down in their own eyes. And well might they be, but I don't think the enemy is today, do you? Don't you think in closing, brethren, we ought to take more knowledge and stock of those things that are against us, brought against us by the enemy?

We see the apostle Paul says that we are not ignorant of his devices, and let us not be ignorant of them, but let us be as this man found in this book of Nehemiah, and let it be that when the enemy attacks us, let it be that we resort to him that was able to finish the work here, because I feel in this way, in this way alone, it will be that you'll have blessing in this meeting where you are.