

Rebuilding the walls

Part 1

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Date	13.02.1965
Duration	01:03:48
Online version	https://www.audioteaching.org/en/sermons/rkc005/rebuilding-the-walls

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[00:00:00] This is a recording of an address given by Mr. Campbell from the United States of America at Bridewell Hall on the 13th of February 1965. His subject, Rebuilding the Walls.

I have on my heart to speak a little on the early chapters of the book of Nehemiah.

We'll read the first chapter. The words of Nehemiah, the son of Hecaliah, came to pass in the month Chislew in the twentieth year, as I was in Shushan, the palace, that Hanani, one of my brethren, came, he and certain men of Judah, and I asked them concerning the Jews that had escaped, which are left of the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem. They said unto me, The remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province are in great affliction and reproach. [00:01:10] The wall of Jerusalem also is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire. It came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven, and said, I beseech thee, O Lord God of heaven, the great and terrible God that keepeth covenant and mercy for them that love him and observe his commandments. Let thine ear now be attentive, and thine eyes open, that thou mayest hear the prayer of thy servant, which I pray before thee now, day and night, for the children of Israel thy servants, [00:02:05] and confess the sins of the children of Israel, which we have sinned against thee. Both I and my Father's house have sinned. We have dealt very corruptly against thee, and have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the judgments, which thou commandest thy servant Moses. Remember, I beseech thee, the word that thou commandest thy servant Moses, saying, If ye transgress, I will scatter you abroad among the nations. But if ye turn unto me, and keep my commandments, and do them, though there were of you cast out unto the uttermost part of the heaven, yet will I gather them from thence, and will bring them unto the place that I have chosen to set my name there. [00:03:05] Now these are thy servants, and thy people, whom thou hast redeemed by thy great power, and by thy strong hand. O Lord, I beseech thee, let now thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servant, and to the prayer of thy servants, who desire to fear thy name. And prosper, I pray thee, thy servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man. For I was the king's cupbearer." I'm sure we need make no apology for reading a portion of God's word like this from the Old Testament. For I'm sure we all believe that all scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable. [00:04:02] And we believe the word that all these things are written aforetime are written for our learning, for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. While this is in the Old Testament of a bygone day, we know that the principles of God never change. Dispensations change, but the principles of God are the same in every dispensation. God is righteous, God is holy, God is loved, he is gracious, merciful, and man is sinful.

The heart of man is the same in every age or wherever we go. It is well known among us that in these post-captivity books of Ezra and Nehemiah and the later minor prophets, we have wonderful instruction for us.

[00:05:20] We know that in Ezra there was a return of a little remnant from the Babylonian captivity, a return to God's center at Jerusalem. For God's people had come under discipline and chastisement because of departure from the word of God.

But God was true to his word. He remembered his people. And there was a divine movement to return to Jerusalem. And the first thing they did was to set up the altar upon its bases. [00:06:06] And it says, for fear of the people about. This shows that their confidence was in the Lord to begin with the altar of worship, to give God his place and his portion first of all, and then he would undertake for them. It would look a little strange to us, wouldn't it, to put up an altar as a thing of protection from the enemy. But they gave God the first place. And we have the building of the temple. The altar set upon its bases, not starting something new, but a return to that which had been. And God prospered this. Some years rolled by, and we come to the book of Nehemiah, where God begins to work again. And we know we have a wonderful work of God performed in days of difficulty and opposition and stress in this wonderful book. [00:07:15] And God greatly used this servant. He had an Ezra in the days previous, the ready scribe who taught the people, who set his heart first of all to know and to practice and then to teach. And this is divine order.

But I'm not in the book of Ezra now. We must carry on here. But here we see a fresh exercise. And it's well for us to note some of the great features of this servant, Nehemiah, whom God used.

[00:08:01] And they are examples for us at all times. The first thing we have brought to our attention with this servant is that he asks concerning the Jews that escaped of the captivity and concerning Jerusalem, here is a man who's interested in the welfare of God's people, his brethren. And not only that, but of Jerusalem, God's testimony. The place where he had chosen to place his name, great and wonderful name of Jehovah, that he is jealous about.

That is what is stressed in the last book in this Old Testament, Malachi, in a day of greater ruin than what we find here even, of indifference. You'll find the name is stressed nine times. God is jealous about the glory of his name. [00:09:12] Jerusalem was the place where he had chosen to place his name. What answers to that today is where two or three are gathered together unto my name. There am I in the midst. His church in this scene where he's given his place in the midst and worship and honor is given to him and all that there should be. Nehemiah has a concern for the welfare of his brethren. And he asks about them.

We find in the second chapter, we may come to a little later, that the enemy was grieved that there was come a man to seek the welfare of the children of Israel. This is what the enemy had to recognize. Nehemiah was a man who was concerned about the welfare of his people, God's people, and of Jerusalem, the place where he had placed his name. [00:10:19] And so he inquires, and it's always well to inquire about the welfare of our brethren, isn't it? Members of one body, wherever they may be, I like to hear about the children of God throughout the world. Brethren in Christ, to know what the Lord is doing of their welfare, and so it ought to be with all of us, the whole Church of God. And he hears this sad story. This was not a good report. It was a true report. And we find in Nehemiah's reaction to it.

[00:11:19] He sits down and weeps and mourns and fasts and prays. It's been well said that when God is about to work, he first stirs up hearts to pray.

Every work of God must begin with prayer and with burdened hearts. Now, beloved, we're not just concerned about some past history, but surely this has an application for us right today in 1965, does it not? In America, in England, or wherever we may go, what is the true condition of the people of God? Are we not in affliction and reproach? Are not the walls broken down and the gates not in action?

[00:12:29] Surely this is our need today, to face the ruin that we find ourselves in. Our brethren whom God stirred up some 120, 130 years ago, to whom he recovered much precious truths, they started here.

The Church is in ruin. And they did not aim to restore that ruin, but to take their place as part of that ruin, and to seek for a little reviving and a return to first principles of the Word of God.

[00:13:19] But how the ruin has increased since.

How those of us who have been called out by the Spirit of God to give a testimony to the truth of the one body, to the person and glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom has been committed the precious truths of the recovery, not only of the full gospel, but of the Church, of the coming of the Lord Jesus, and all the counsels of God, recovered and brought out. But how are we today? We have to face these things, don't we? And if there was affliction and reproach in those days, it surely is today.

[00:14:16] The ruin that we find ourselves in, broken fragments, these are the truths. And if God is to give any blessing, we must start here, I believe, as Nehemiah, to weep and mourn.

The Apostle Paul was a man of tears. Timothy was a man of tears. Others were men of tears. Jeremiah, our Lord Jesus Christ, wept over Jerusalem. But how many tears do we really see today?

Perhaps we just accept things. Now, this is not popular preaching, but, beloved, this is a message that's laid on my heart. This is in the Word of God. And I believe we need to face these things, to own the ruin, the failure, the low condition of things among us. [00:15:24] We cannot point to someone else. We must begin with ourselves. You know, one brother said, and it's something like it in Isaiah, every time we put our finger out like that, one finger to point at somebody else, we have three others pointing at ourselves. Triune God is pointing at us, condemnation. Well, this is the place to start. We approach, we approach an affliction, a broken testimony for the world. Much could be said on this. I will not labor the point. [00:16:07] But that the Lord might speak to us and stir us up, we might be before God in the dust. We've said, Nehemiah sat down and he wept and he mourned. You know, I carry around in my Bible a little extract, words of that dear servant of God whom God raised up among us, J. N. Darby. I've been printing a little pamphlet, Nearness to Christ. I'd just like to read a few words of this.

Dear servant of God went to be with the Lord, not 1882, I don't know just exactly when he wrote this, but here we are in 1965 and things have not gotten better. They've gotten worse. But he wrote then, neither the anger nor the prudence nor the pretensions of man can do anything in the state of confusion in which the church is now. [00:17:12] I freely own that I have no hope in the efforts which

many make to assure themselves an ecclesiastical position. When the house is ruined in its foundations by an earthquake, it matters little how one tries to make it an agreeable dwelling place. We shall do better to remain where the first discovery of the ruin of things by man's deed has placed us, with our faces in the dust. Such is the place which belongs to us by right, and after all, it is the place of blessing. I have read of a time when several were gathered together in such sorrow of heart that for a long time they could not utter a single word, but the floor of the meeting room was wet with their tears. If the Lord would grant us such meetings again, it would be our wisdom to frequent these houses of tears. They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. Psalm 136 verse 5. [00:18:18] It is not only for the earthly remnant that this is true. It is also written for us. I would willingly take a long journey to join these afflicted ones, but I would not go a step further with the object of receiving from the hands of most excellent men power to overturn all today and reconstruct tomorrow. I think it is not out of place to read these words. The scripture exhorts us, remember your leaders who have spoken to you the word of Christ. Well, this was the exercise of Nehemiah, and he prayed, and in self-denial. [00:19:04] And we notice his prayer is very short and to the point, isn't it? But I would write, to be very practical on this, don't we need to notice the prayers of scripture, the prayers of our Lord? They are not long. They are not long, but to the point.

I sometimes think even our prayer meetings and elsewhere we need to say like the disciples, Lord, teach us how to pray. Pray effectively, the effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. Nehemiah was in dead earnest, and he prays to God. Notice how he speaks.

The God of heaven that keepeth covenant and mercy for them that love him and observe his commandments. Let thine eyes be open, tender unto the prayer of thy servant. [00:20:12] And it's a prayer of confession. And confess the sins of the children of Israel, which we have sinned against thee, both I and my Father's house have sinned. Beloved, are we willing to pray that prayer? As brethren, all brethren have failed in sin. We may look back to past divisions and our forefathers and say of the failures there, and there has been. God's chastening hand has been upon us, and we must recognize it. We cannot ignore the past, but we must come right here and say, both I and my Father's house have sinned. [00:21:01] Have we done any better? Can we do any better today? No. So we need to take our place, humility before God, owning ourselves as part of this ruin and confusion that has come in, the reproach in the name of brethren.

You know, this came home rather strongly to me just yesterday as we returned to London. I heard of some of these things, I knew about it. There was a young chap sitting in the train across from us. Brother Miss and I had been talking. He was looking. It was on my heart to give him a gospel tract, and so I gave it to him. He said, What sect is this? Is this exclusive? Well, I knew what he was thinking. I said, No. He turned it over and looked and he read it. All right.

[00:22:09] I said to him, The Bible is very inclusive. It includes us all. All have sinned and come short of the glory of God, and the Savior is for all. Yes, the Bible is inclusive. But you see, the reproach, what has been, we are part of that. And we believe in these truths that have been designated under such a name, those extremes.

The departure from the person and the character of our Lord Jesus Christ. What kind of a testimony do we give to the world about us? Well, we have dealt very corruptly, Nehemiah said. [00:23:01] He might have said, Well, I haven't had any part of that. But he identified himself with the sins of God's people. He identified himself with the condition. And all men of God have done that. Ezra did it. Daniel did it. And anybody that God will use, we must identify ourselves with the state and condition

of God's people. Get down in the dust there. Then the Lord will lift us up. Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God. And he may lift you up. He may exalt us. This is the place for us. Nehemiah took this place. But notice, he doesn't stay there. If we just stay there, it's a very dismal picture. There wouldn't be any hope. But he says in verse 8, Remember, I beseech you, the word that thou commandest thy servant Moses, if he transgressed, I'll scatter you abroad. Yes, we remember what God has said. He would chastise us. And we must not just look at past failures and things as sins and mistakes and so on. That we'll be in the bygone. This thing is of me, it was said one time, the first division in Israel. There's a reason God's chastening hand upon us. He has a lesson for us. [00:24:28] It's often been said, in the word, he had a controversy with the children of Israel. Has God not had a controversy with us and our scattering? But the word is, not only that, but he said, if you turn unto me and keep my commandments, yet will I gather them. We must fall back upon God's word. He knows what man has ever proved himself to be. A failure.

[00:25:06] It's been rightly said in the past of dear men of God, that if brethren gather to the Lord's name or are a testimony to anything, they are a testimony to the ruin of the church. We just showed it again. But God is faithful. We own our condition, our state. His word is, I will gather if you turn unto me and keep my commandments, and I will gather. And so we must turn to him. Contrition, humiliation, acknowledging our failure. Turn to him, and he says, I will bring them unto the place that I have chosen to set my name there. Man may fail, but divine principles never fail. There's no use in giving up divine principles because of the failure of men, of saints of God, to carry them out. We must acknowledge our failure. The principles remain the same. [00:26:12] And therefore, us now in 1965, as well as they were in 1885, or any other time. So he says, I'll gather them to the place where I've chosen to place my name.

Though Jerusalem was in ruin, God had to chastise his people and carry them away. Yet he would bring them back again to that same place. And there was a recovery movement in Ezra. And more had to be done now in the days of Nehemiah. So there's the word, and the name. Notice this. The place, and my name. The place ever remains where our Lord Jesus would be in the midst of those gathered truly to his name. To remember his word, to keep his word, and not deny his name. [00:27:12] And then thirdly, we have in verse 10, Now these are thy servants, and thy people. God never gives up his people. In all our failures, he never fails us. He's true to his promise. And Nehemiah has a real heart for the people of God. So must we. We must love the people of God, wherever we may find them. I cannot go on with all that's going on. I'm not called upon to walk in the same paths that all the people of God may be walking in. God has set out a path for us, in obedience to his word. And though that path may be narrow, as it ever is, we must never get our hearts narrowed. We must never get our affections narrowed. As dear J.N. Darby often said, the feet in the narrow path. The heart as wide as possible. Taking in all God's people. But if you get a wide heart, don't get a wide path. For the path is narrow. [00:28:23] Obedience to the truth. But the people of God, they're redeemed. We must love them, concern about them. And so Nehemiah is concerned about them. And he says, Now hear the prayer of thy servant, and of thy servants who desire to fear thy name. This is what marked out that godly remnant in Malachi's day. Those that thought upon his name. Who feared his name. It says, Then, when there was a great evil indifference amongst the professing people of God. [00:29:02] That wonderful Malachi 3.16. You know, we all love John 3.16. But here's another wonderful 3.16. And I think 2 Timothy 3.16 is another wonderful one. There it is, that little remnant. They thought upon his name. And they feared him. So here he says, Those who desire to fear thy name. That did not dishonor that name. To represent that name here below. For the name stands for all that the person is. I pray and grant that thy servant may find mercy in the sight of this man.

And we know the story in the second chapter. He's before the king and he's sad. He's prayed here. Nehemiah prays all through this book. Prayer, beloved. Never give up, pray. Never give up hope in our God. For he is true. He answers prayer. And he can do wonders. [00:30:12] And so as he's about his work, the king says, What's the matter? What's the matter? Well, we see in the second chapter, verse 4, that before he answers the king, he prayed to the God of heaven. Wonderful, this man of Nehemiah. Prayer is dependence, you know. Prayer is the air which we breathe. And before he answers the king, he shoots up a prayer to God. A man that's walking in communion with God. This is, I believe, an illustration of what we're called to in the New Testament, instant in prayer. To turn instantly to God. Before he would say a word to the king, he prays to God. And so he says, If it please the king, thy servant hath found favour in thy sight, thou wilt send me unto Judah, into the city of my father's sepulchres, that I may build it. [00:31:12] I like this. Nehemiah was a builder. He wanted to be a builder. So we all ought to be. We ought to desire to build. That's the same thought as the word edify that we have in the New Testament. Edify. It means to build, to build up. Are we builders, beloved? It takes a little skill, it takes a little diligence to build. My dear father-in-law, G.A. Wisey, who has appeared here in years gone by, perhaps in this very platform, he used to say to us, anybody can tear down. It takes a real tradesman or mechanic to build. So it's easy to criticize. It's easy to tear down, to find fault. But to build. Get in there and help. Give a helping hand to that brother or sister who's getting astray. Build.

[00:32:22] Nehemiah says, I want to build. Build the testimony of our Lord Jesus Christ. Build it up. So it pleased the king. God is working. So he speaks of the good hand of my God upon him. You'll notice that expression through this book, my God. Same as Paul uses in Philippians 4, my God. What does that mean? It means he knew him personally. He knew him as his God who was true to his word. Not just the God of our fathers, but he's my God, whom I depend upon, look to. And I like that expression in this book, the good hand of my God. [00:33:06] Ezra spoke of that too. We need the hand of God upon us. And it is only as God's hand is pleased to be upon us for good that there be any blessing or use any of us. But we must be in a condition before him that he could use us. As in 2 Timothy 2, he says he would use vessels that are sanctified, meet for the master's use, and ready for every good work. Now we exercise, beloved, young and old, to be vessels in the Lord's hand, that his hand can be upon us for good, to use us to build up testimony of the Lord's people. Testimony to the name of the Lord. Well, God's hand is there. But verse 10, we read of something else.

[00:34:04] This is something we find throughout this book. A sevenfold opposition of the enemy you find in Nehemiah.

When God works, the enemy is right there to work too. He never leaves any work of God unchallenged. And if God is real, the enemy is real too. We must realize this, that we have a real enemy to deal with.

He has various ways of working. And I mentioned already you'll find in this book a sevenfold opposition of the enemy. If he cannot succeed in one way, he tries another way. It might be good at this point to just briefly point out this sevenfold opposition of the enemy, to see his tactics. [00:35:16] Here it was, the enemy expressed his opposition in grief. That may be very mild, but the enemy doesn't like it if someone is stirred up or raised up to seek the welfare of God's people. The enemy wants to scatter the sheep. The wolf comes to scatter, divide and conquer. We need to draw together. There's a togetherness in Ezra and also in Nehemiah. And I often think, you know, the sheep, they're very timid. It doesn't take much to scatter them. One goes here and one goes there.

[00:36:02] The enemy has various ways of scattering. It's the work of the Holy Spirit to gather around the Lord Jesus Christ. Truth of his word. The wolf, the lion, frightening sheep. God's people easily get frightened and scattered. But one who comes to gather, to seek their welfare, the enemy stirs himself at once. These men, Sanballat and Tobiah, are subtle men of authority in the land, but they're not of it. They had no right to be in this land. This was God's land that he'd given to his people. They're those who take a place of authority in Christendom today, but have really no right to be there. They are not God's now. But we're here. And they take religious authority. They oppose the things of God. [00:37:08] The second form of opposition we find in the 19th verse. But perhaps before we come to that, we could just follow on Nehemiah a little bit. We find that he came, verse 12, he arose in the night.

And he went, verse 13, out by the night, by the gate of the valley, even before the dragon well and to the dung port, and viewed the walls of Jerusalem which were broken down, and the gates thereof were consumed with fire. I hope to get on to the third chapter where we will consider some of these gates and their important spiritual significance and lessons for us. But I think it's well to note, as Nehemiah came by night to view the walls, to see the situation, that it is stated he went by the gate of the valley. [00:38:17] We can well see that the valley speaks of the low place. He's humble, a humble man. He comes in by the valley gate. And there's the dung port. We will see in the third chapter about the dung gate. That's where the refuge was carried away, what needs to be put out and put away. But then, verse 14, I went on to the gate of the fountain, to the king's pool. And we're going to see in the third chapter about the gate of the fountain. Our Lord Jesus spoke of the fountain in John 4 and 7. There's the river. But John 4, he that believeth on me, the Spirit said, shall have in him a well of living water, springing up to eternal life. That's a fountain. Speaks of the Holy Spirit dwelling in the believer.

[00:39:22] There's old Miss Collins. There's no lack with the Spirit of God. We're a poor and a feeble people, like the Cones that had to run for refuge in the rocks. But within us dwells that well of life. And if we're not grieving the Holy Spirit, if we're letting the Holy Spirit have his way with us, not only to be resident in our life, but president, we will know something of the fountain of blessing. [00:40:02] Fresh, fresh water. Spirit of God is the same. And he would undertake and work for us. There's the fountain gate. So we find he went out and he went on, on to the fountain. Then verse 15, then went I up in the night by the brook and viewed the wall. But oh, what ruin he sees. No wall here. No wall built up. But he knew where to go and it's all very suggestive. Progress, you see. He arose. He went out. He went on. We must never go on. That's what we get in Philippians 4. Let us go on. When I'm on that point, I just throw out a little something lovely that I've enjoyed for years as a young lad from hearing a Syrian brother speak of the epistle to the Philippians as the go epistle. [00:41:02] And the first chapter, he said, you go out with the gospel. The second chapter, you go down to the lowly mind of Christ. The third chapter, you go up to Christ in glory. And the fourth chapter, you go on to Christ our strength. Isn't that lovely? Go on. Let us go on. And Nehemiah went on. And he went up. And soon we're going to go up. Soon we're going to go up to eternal glory. His coming is very near. Now Nehemiah comes. He looks at this by night. Then verse 17, then said I unto them. Verse 16, it tells about the rulers and the priests and the nobles. But in verse 17, then said I unto them, you see the distress that we are in. How Jerusalem lieth waste and the gates thereof are burned with fire. Come and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem that we be no more a reproach. [00:42:04] Then I told them of the hand of my God, which was good upon me. This is so instructive for us, beloved. You see the wonderful approach of a man of God, like Nehemiah, who's a man of prayer, a man of humility, a man of tears.

Now he comes to Jerusalem. You know, he could have said, and if I might use some of our American vernacular, I don't know what yours is over here, but the plain everyday speech, you know. He could

have said why you people up here are in an awful mess. I guess you understand that word. You're in an awful condition of things. It's terrible what you, the way you are up here. No wall, everything's down, you better get going and do something about it. He could have said that and accomplished nothing. [00:43:12] But it's beautiful to see Nehemiah. He says, you see the distress that we are in. That makes a lot of difference, doesn't it? That makes all the difference. He put himself right in it. Beloved, we've come over from America. We want to say the same, the distress that we are in, in America and in England and elsewhere. There's a poor, feeble, broken remnant. We are in distress and reproach.

But he says, come, let us build up the wall. He could have said, I'm going to show you how to build this wall. I'm going to do something. Things are going to happen now. We're going to get going here. No, a man of God doesn't talk like that. [00:44:10] But he says, come, let us. Let us build the wall. That's what we need to say to one another, beloved. You see the distress that we are in. Walls of separation from the world and the professing ecclesiastical world are broken down.

Come, let us build up the wall of testimony, the wall of protection, the wall of inclusion with Christ. As we come to the truth of the wall, I want to stress the positive side of separation.

Separation is unto the Lord Jesus Christ. If we don't know the sweetness of inclusion with Christ, we won't be ready to take the bitterness of exclusion from the world.

[00:45:18] But enjoy, first of all, the sweetness of inclusion with Christ, enjoying him separated unto himself. Then we'll have strength ready to go on. Through separation, we'll find that that wall is a protection, a protection from the enemy, from all his devices. So he says, I told them of the good hand of my God was upon me. And the wonderful response was, they said, let us rise up and build. So they strengthened their hands for this good work. Isn't it lovely to read this? God worked. But our approach must be careful and according to his word. And God works in hearts. They were ready to respond. He had prayed, prayed much beforehand. [00:46:20] And God must work. God must work in our hearts. And to build up the wall is a good work. It says so here. They strengthened their hands for this good work. And as we would desire that God might strengthen our hands for this good work, beloved. The wall of protection, of separation unto Christ, separation from, then the world, and inclusion with him. There's much we could say about this. A time passes by.

In Exodus 33, verse 16, you remember Moses said, let thy presence go with it. After that awful fiasco, after that awful breakdown in Exodus 32, the golden calf set up in the camp of Israel.

[00:47:24] He sought the Lord's presence to go with him. He said, if thy presence go not with us, carry us up, not up hence. If the Lord cannot go with us, his power and his presence, what have we? We have nothing. We are as water spilt upon the ground that cannot be gathered up again. But he said then, so shall it be known. Thy presence is with us, and so shall we be separated. What will separate us is the presence of the Lord with us in power. We cannot walk with the world, but we are enjoying the sweetness of his presence.

[00:48:10] So it is spoken of in Leviticus also. Let us rise up and build. Well, we could talk about, too, what we can build with. We remember the words of the apostle in 1 Corinthians 3. As a wise master builder, I have laid the foundation thereof. Other foundation can no man lay, say that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. But then he says, let a man take heed how he builds thereof. We need to be careful how we build. I know he's talking about something else there, as building the house, the

outward house. And we need to use gold and silver and precious stones. But we can apply it here also. We need to build rightly, according to God's word.

[00:49:06] In Ezekiel 13, verses 10 to 15, you might make a note of it if you wish. We haven't time to read it now. But you will see there that God spoke against those who were building with untempered mortar. And they were daubing the wall with untempered mortar. God says, I'll tear it down. What does it mean to build with untempered mortar? Well, I'm not much of a mason. I did work with the masons one time as a boy to earn a few pennies, dollars. And I know that great care had to be taken to mix that mortar right. It means a proper mixture. The right condition. To me it would suggest our hearts must be in the right condition. There must be a suited condition to build that the Spirit of God can use. [00:50:08] Now we have the second opposition of the enemy. Verse 19, when Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite and Geshem the Arabian herded, they laughed us to scorn and despised us and said, what is this thing that you do? Will you rebel against the king? This is a stronger form of opposition, laughter and despising what these two would do. But Nehemiah says the God of heaven, he'll prosper us. Therefore we his servants will arise and build. But ye have no portion nor right nor memorial in Jerusalem. Nehemiah was a straightforward man. There's no compromise. You're either on the Lord's side or you're not. These men who made a profession and would take a place of authority in the land and had no right to, they were not the redeemed of the Lord. He says you have no right or portion here. [00:51:14] So those who are unsaved, be they ever so religious, have ever so many titles after their name? No place in the things of God.

Now we find the building of the wall. I want to quickly look at a little in this wonderful third chapter. This third chapter is so full of wonderful things. You may say, is it? Why are there so many difficult names here to read? That's one of the chapters I just passed over. Well, we've come to reading of the names. I find difficulty myself in pronouncing them right. But if you passed over this third chapter of Nehemiah, you've missed many wonderful things. This is a chapter where you have to dig a little bit and you will get the wonderful reward. [00:52:12] There's not only a wall, you know, we've read about gates. God has gates, places of entrance and exit. This wall round about Jerusalem, the place where he's placed his name, where the temple was, where his presence was, where his people came, where they worshiped and were blessed of the Lord. There's a wall of protection round about, but there are the gates. So we read in verse one, Eliashib, the high priest, rose up with his brethren, the priests, and they builded the sheep gate. They sanctified it, set up the doors of it, even unto the tower of Miah. They sanctified it unto the tower of Hananiel. The first gate we read of is the sheep gate. Well, this sounds quite simple and very familiar, doesn't it? Surely this is the place to begin. Who can come inside this sacred enclosure?

[00:53:20] Well, the Lord Jesus said, my sheep, my sheep. And you'll find in the fifth of John that the Lord found this important man at the sheep gate. The sheep gate is where the shepherd meets the sheep.

And you'll find that there's a tower here, the tower of Miah. Names in scripture have meanings. Miah means a hundred. Doesn't remind us of the shepherd who leads the hundred? Safe in the fold and goes out after the one lost sheep to bring them in. Yes, the sheep gate must be built up. [00:54:08] Who can come in? Those who are the sheep of Christ. And not only that, there's a little bit more. The Lord Jesus says he calls the sheep out, he calls them by name, and I know them and he says they follow me. They follow me. And I give unto them eternal life and they shall never perish. You know, I have no right to claim the last part of that verse of blessed security if I'm not showing in my life that I'm following the Lord. We may tell people that we have eternal security and we surely have. But do

you think anybody's going to believe it if we're not following the shepherd? Before he says about eternal life, he says they follow me and I give unto them eternal life. Let's see that we hold both.

[00:55:08] I was visiting, doing some pioneer work years ago up in northern Wisconsin, visiting in a home of a believer. It wasn't gathered with us there in the little gathering, but we had fellowship in the Lord together in the home. And she said, yes, their pastor said we can fellowship of the Lord's people if they make sheep tracks. I never heard anybody say that before, but I thought it was a pretty good expression. Not only blah like a sheep, make the sound of a sheep, but make the tracks of a sheep. You'll never find sheep tracks in the mud puddles. That's where you find the pigs. The sheep don't love the mud. So she meant, you see, the walk. If we walk as sheep, walk as Christians, our walk marks us out as the sheep of Christ. And furthermore, we find if we come inside, we must be subject to the order of God's house. Holiness becometh our house. [00:56:22] And we find in connection with the Lord's supper and in the Lord's table in 1 Corinthians 10 and 11, it is the Lord. It isn't the supper of Jesus. It isn't the table of Jesus. But it is the Lord's supper. What does that mean? It means his lordship. I must acknowledge him as Lord and master to be submissive to his order and to his way. If you want to do that, you're a sheep of Christ, you're known, come in. This is for the sheep. The first thing is built. The gate is built up. The next, uh, uh, Hananiah, Hananiah means the grace of Yah, the grace of God. It's only by the grace of God that we are his sheep. It's only by the grace of God that we've been kept to this very hour. We must recognize his grace that has saved us and brings us in. [00:57:20] But it says next unto him build the men of Jericho. Next to them builded Zechariah, the son of Imri, but the fish gate did the sons of Hazzanah build, who also laid the beams thereof, and set up the doors thereof, the locks thereof, and the bars thereof. In wonderful order now we have the fish gate is built up. We should be familiar what that would mean. The Lord Jesus said I'll make you fishers of men. We go in at the sheep gate, we go out of the fish gate to look for some others, and bring them to the shepherd. Bring them to the sheep gate too, to bring them in. [00:58:08] The two are beautifully here together. We need to build up the fish gate, beloved. That is going out to others, looking for souls. Not being satisfied that we're inside and enjoying all these privileges, but what about the many others who are outside? The children, the young people, and the old ones. They have a love for souls. Perhaps we come into a condition of ruin because of a lack of building up the fish gate. Two things that are necessary.

But now we want to notice something here. And also in the following gates. You notice it says that they built the beams and the doors and the locks and the bars. They put locks and bars on all these gates. And there were porters at the gates, we'll read later on. [00:59:04] But did you notice that when Eliashib, the high priest, built the sheep gate, it doesn't say anything about any locks and bars. Was this good or not? Was this just an omission?

We should learn not only from what scripture says, but from what it doesn't say. Now how will we look at this? Should we have locks and bars at the sheep gate? Must we be careful in reception into the house of God?

Well, you know, if you just turn over, if you go on to the end, if you're acquainted with this book of Nehemiah, you will know that this Eliashib, though he was the high priest and started out first, the highest in position, but a man that doesn't put any locks and bars on the gate he builds and the sheep gate, you find in the 13th chapter that he's a liar. [01:00:19] He's allied with the enemy. He has even, in the absence of Nehemiah, made a provision for one of the enemy to come in.

Chapter 13, verse 4, And Nehemiah just threw him out. Doesn't that speak to us?

A man who's careless about building the sheep gate, he ends up allied with the enemy and has a place for the enemy in the house of God, one that had no right or portion there, the unsaved.

[01:01:16] And he was furthermore depriving the Levites of their portion, so they had to flee, leave the work of God and go to the fields. Solemn lessons, but I must hurry on. We want to notice too, in this chapter, how it says, Next unto him, all the way through, after him, and next unto him, so and so repaired. There's a wonderful cooperation and fellowship here in building this wall. That's what we need, beloved. We need to be workers together.

Is there somebody in the assembly that you don't want to work next to? Somebody that you don't want to maybe just even sit next to? [01:02:07] Oh, we know the treacherousness of our human hearts. There's going to be a gap there.

This is not individual work. We cannot be individuals. We are individuals, I know, but there must be fellowship even in the gospel. Paul speaks of it in Philippians, there's fellowship in the gospel. We ought to work in consistency with the testimony, united to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, where we worship.

Next to him, next to him, not just individuals here and there, but fellowship together. But there were the nobles that wouldn't put their necks to this work, and it's written down in the Word. Well, the next gate is verse 6, the old gate is repaired.

[01:03:03] Jeremiah 6.16 would remind us of the old gate. In Jeremiah's day, he said, ask for the old path, and walk therein, you shall find rest for your soul. Not something new, but a return to the Word of God, return to divine principles, the old paths.

But they said, we will not walk therein. No, they did not want to walk in the old paths. Do we? Do we ought to bring in something new?

We must get back to the pattern in the Word, walk in the old paths.