

Rebuild: A Series Through Nehemiah

Sometime this week you're going to find yourself trying to put those words together and that song is called "Free Amen." It's group out of Nashville called We The Kingdom. I know we'll be singing it a lot together and maybe look for that this week and learn it and sing it and continue to worship the Lord. I want to invite you to take your Bibles and open them to the Old Testament book of Nehemiah. Thank you for the way you received David Butler last week. Carla and I were away for the weekend taking some rest and we are excited that you were able to hear David Butler in our absence. You learn very fast, I believe, why we value him and his wife Gail and his heart for the Lord, and God is using him in a mighty way in the city of Boston and in that area around the city. Maybe from last week your heart was stirred with the desire to see the gap close between where you are currently spiritually and where God wants you to be. David spoke last Sunday about us seeing that gap closed, about us spiritually growing and coming to a point where Christ is our life. Not just in our life and not us just living for him, but Christ is our life. Maybe that was stirred in you to see that kind of relationship built.

A couple of weeks ago. We were in the book of Nehemiah talking about this idea of rebuilding, and maybe God has stirred in your heart or he will this morning, some area of your life that needs to be rebuilt. Maybe it's a relationship with a parent or a child. Maybe it's a marriage that needs to be put back together. Maybe it's a career, maybe it's finances, maybe it's a reputation. It might be something in our society, in our culture that you sense with a great sense of oughtness that God has called you some way somehow and at some time to contribute to rebuilding that part of our world. Well, we're looking at Nehemiah and we see a man that God used and he did miracles through him. And the walls around the city of Jerusalem were broken down and God used Nehemiah, the burden in his heart, to lead the people to rebuild the walls around the city of Jerusalem. We're calling this study through Nehemiah, "Rebuild", with a little subtitle there, "The impact of one life committed to the glory of God." God rebuilds broken things and those burdens that you have on your heart and in your life that you see and know that needed to be rebuilt. A great hope for us is this: God rebuilds broken things.

There's an important piece to this work of God. The broken things that we would want to see put back together, our goal must be God's glory above all. You might look at something and say, "You know, if I could re-establish and rebuild that relationship with my son or my daughter, or my mom or my dad, that would bring such a happiness to our family. That'd bring so much peace to our home. That'd bring so much laughter, that'd bring so much joy. There'd be so many things we could experience together again if that relationship was rebuilt. That would be good." And those would be some benefits. But for God to do his miraculous work in us and for us to stay the course and see those things rebuilt, we've got to put first and foremost in our heart, in our mind, in our target, God getting the glory. Of God being the one that is our ultimate reward. That when what's broken comes back together, the largest celebration, the biggest celebration is that God, once again, in this situation is who he is. He gets the glory, He gets the praise. And when we talk about it being put back together, we celebrate. But real fast in that we say, "It's God." God did it. It's what he does. It's how God works.

I want to ask you some questions. I think three specific questions to walk us through this message today from Nehemiah. Number one, what are you burdened to rebuild? It may already be on your mind. It may be something that the spirit of God brings to your mind and

heart right now. It may be personally your relationship with Christ. It could be a wide range of things that you know and when you look at it, it's just broken down. What are you burdened to rebuild? What has broken your heart? What has brought tears to your soul? We saw that Nehemiah heard the report of the people of Israel being in a state of derision. They were being laughed at. They were seen as someone who had been defeated and those walls broken down. And he heard that report and he began to weep. He began to fast. He began to mourn and he began to wait and look and pray and watch for God to open up opportunities for him to be a part of that city being rebuilt. What are you burdened to rebuild?

Number two, what will make you quit? What will make you quit? What's going to cause you to give up on it? Maybe just real quick you'd say, "It's just too hard. It's just too hard." "It costs too much." "I'm not equipped." "God got the wrong person." "I'm afraid, Pastor. I'm just afraid." All of those responses of what might make us quit kind of fall in this same category of one word, opposition. The great temptation for us to quit on what God has called us to rebuild is the opposition that we experience along the way. We said a couple of weeks ago, talking about patience, that God powerfully works when we patiently wait. That's true. And we see how God was at work as Nehemiah waited on opportunities and he waited for time to pass, for him to move ahead in rebuilding the walls. Just as true as God powerfully works when we patiently wait, there's something else about opposition that we need to see here and it's this. When we rise to rebuild, opposition rises to resist. More than once, Nehemiah gives testimony that God's good hand was on him. God's good hand was on the people. God's good hand was in the plans, but even in the midst of that context of God's good hand being on the plans, you see that opposition was also rising all around him. The consistent companion of a rebuild is opposition. The consistent companion of a rebuild is opposition.

Here's the third question. What are you burdened to rebuild? What will make you quit? Number three, how do we overcome and outlast opposition? How do we overcome an outlast opposition? I guess if you could boil it all down this morning, I'm hoping that we could leave out of here at about 11:30 recognizing something that God has called us to rebuild, but there would be a new resolve even in the face of opposition that we won't quit on this. We won't quit on it, and the reason we won't quit ultimately is because of God's glory. His name is at stake. And when you come to Nehemiah, the opposition is there, it's hovering, it's being stirred, it's rising. In Nehemiah chapter one he gets the report and the burden, and he prays. Nehemiah chapter two, he goes before the King and he's doing his job and the King is asking what's going on. He presents to the King his request to go to Jerusalem and then in chapter two, the last part of that chapter, he goes to Jerusalem. Just to kind of dive in and pick up the context, Nehemiah chapter two verse eight, he's asked the King for some letters. He's asked the King for some safe passage to make this two months journey to Jerusalem from Susa. Right in the middle of the sentence, verse 8, "And a letter to Asaph, the keeper of the king's forest, that he may give me timber to make beams for the gates of the fortress of the temple, and for the wall of the city, and for the house that I shall occupy." And listen to this last sentence of verse eight, "And the King granted me what I ask, for the good hand of my God was upon me." That's a good report. "The good hand of God was upon me."

Next verse, "Then I came to the governors of the province Beyond the River and gave them the king's letters. Now the king had sent with me officers of the army and horsemen. 10 But when Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite servant heard this, it displeased them greatly that someone had come to seek the welfare of the people of Israel." You see it? Right in the midst of this context, verse eight, "God's good hand is upon us." Verse 10, Sanballat

and Tobiah are displeased that someone had come to seek the welfare of the people. Look at verse 17, "Then I said to them, "You see the trouble we are in, how Jerusalem lies in ruins with its gates burned. Come, let us build the wall of Jerusalem, that we may no longer suffer derision." 18 And I told them of the hand of my God that had been upon me for good, and also of the words that the king had spoken to me. And they said, "Let us rise up and build." So they strengthened their hands for the good work."

You see? He comes to the city, Sanballat and Tobias say, "Whoa, what's going on?" He speaks to the people and he rallies them and they come together, they're excited. There's this strength rising in them. They're going to take on the task to rebuild the walls. They respond, "Let us rise up and build." Verse 19, "But when Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite servant and Geshem, the Arab heard of it, they jeered, they jeered at us and despised us and said, what is this thing that you are doing? Are you rebelling against the King?" In chapter two there's opposition. Chapter four, look at it. Move over to chapter four verse one, "Now when Sanballat heard that we were building the wall, he was angry and greatly enraged, and he jeered at the Jews. 2 And he said in the presence of his brothers and of the army of Samaria, "What are these feeble Jews doing? Will they restore it for themselves?[b] Will they sacrifice? Will they finish up in a day?" You see the jeering and the ridicule and the mocking. "Can they do it in a day? Will they revive the stones out of the heaps of rubbish and burn ones at that?" Tobiah, the Ammonite he jumps in, he's just fueled by Sanballat. "Tobiah the Ammonite was beside him," and you could just almost see these guys standing there and Sanballat's, like "What are they going to do? Are they going to do it in a day?" And Tobiah almost seems to elbow him. And he's like, "Yes, what they are building—if a fox goes up on it he will break down their stone wall!" He was saying that their work is so pitiful that a little fox could run across the top of it and it'd all come crumbling down.

Chapter six. You have chapter two, opposition. Chapter four, opposition. Chapter six, the building is going on, opposition. Look at chapter six verse one,

"Now when Sanballat and Tobiah and Geshem the Arab and the rest of our enemies heard that I had built the wall and that there was no breach left in it (although up to that time I had not set up the doors in the gates), 2 Sanballat and Geshem sent to me, saying, "Come and let us meet together at Hakkephirim in the plain of Ono." But they intended to do me harm. 3 And I sent messengers to them, saying, "I am doing a great work and I cannot come down. Why should the work stop while I leave it and come down to you?"

I wrote out in my margin there in chapter six, I just put these words, "Oh no you don't." They were on the plain of Ono and Nehemiah was just saying, "Oh no, you don't."

Chapter two, chapter four, chapter six, opposition. So how do we overcome the opposition? Let me give you three lessons about opposition. Three descriptors of the enemy's work when we're trying to rebuild. Number one, it's common. Opposition is common. I've already said it, that the consistent companion of rebuilding is opposition. Something's going to rise against the glory of God. Warren Wiersbe put it this way, "When you build, you battle." When you build you battle. When you trace from Genesis to Revelation, the common theme there of God's glory being exalted is that there was always opposition to his glory being exalted. It happened in the garden of Eden. 'Did God really say' was the argument. You think about Moses leading the children of Israel out of Egypt and God had called him and you would think all of those people would love to be set free from the bondage of slavery that they were in. And here's a leader that's willing to lead them out and you see at one moment the people would be with him and

for him and then the next moment complaining and grumbling. One moment Pharaoh had said, "Yes, you can go." The next moment, Pharaoh said, "No, you can't", and it's just over and over again Moses was met with opposition as he tried to lead the people.

I mention this so that we won't be caught off guard. Many times we think that when we're doing God's work and we rebuild what God has called us to rebuild, that anything that seems like a closing door seems like the project has been shut down. Just know that opposition to what God has called you to do is common.

Number two, the enemy's work is not only common, the enemy's work is contagious. It started off with Sanballat and Tobiah. Then it went from Sanballat and Tobiah and you begin to read about Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem. And then you go from reading about this outward opposition until you get to chapter six and it spread to an inward opposition. And when you're seeking to rebuild things and God has convicted you, God has given you this burden in your heart and your life, opposition can be contagious. It's attractive to a lot of people to pile on. It goes from two to three, outward to inward. Look in chapter six verse 10. It says, "Now when I went into the house of Shemaiah the son of Delaiah, son of Mehetabel, who was confined to his home, he said, "Let us meet together in the house of God, within the temple. Let us close the doors of the temple, for they are coming to kill you. They are coming to kill you by night." I I But I said, "Should such a man as I run away? And what man such as I could go into the temple and live?[c] I will not go in." 12 And I understood and saw that God had not sent him,"

How did he know that God had not sent him? One way that he knew that God had not sent him was because the counsel that he gave was in violation of God's word. Nehemiah did not qualify to live in the temple. He had no rights before God to live in the temple. And the instruction that he was being given there, that's why the response from Nehemiah was, "Should such a man as I run away, and what man such as I could go into the temple and live." That's not according to God's word. Verse 12, "And I understood and saw that God had not sent him, but he had pronounced the prophecy against me because Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him. 13 For this purpose he was hired, that I should be afraid and act in this way and sin, and so they could give me a bad name in order to taunt me." You see, the enemy's work is common. The enemy's work also is contagious, and it can spread to where it begins to work not only outward opposition but inward. People that maybe you had thought they were with you. You look and the way you discern differences is there a violation of scripture? Is there something here that doesn't match with God's word? You may be trying to put back some relationship and you have people that are beginning to come around you and say, you ought to just give up on that. It's not going to happen. It's not going to work. You may have people saying to you this call that you have to rebuild something in our culture, our society, and they're saying, Hey, it's going to cost too much. You're not equipped for this. This is too big for you and others rally around that. The enemies work is common, the enemy's work is contagious, and number three, the enemy's work is crafty. Crafty.

I want you to find in your Bibles the New Testament book of Second Corinthians. It's a short verse but it's a critical verse for us to understand the enemy and opposition. It's a verse that needs to be underlined, be highlighted in our Bibles. It jumps off the page, be committed to our memory. Second Corinthians, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, acts, Romans First, Second Corinthians. That's for me as much as it is anybody in the room. Second Corinthians chapter two. I want to read verse 11, but to get the context, let's pick up verse 10, "Anyone whom you forgive, I also forgive." This is the apostle Paul speaking. "Anyone whom you forgive, I also

forgive. Indeed, what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, has been for your sake in the presence of Christ, I I so that we would not be outwitted by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his designs." This short verse gives us great insight into our enemies of the glory of God. Satan is identified here as being one who can outwit us. The Greek words there for outwitted and design, they come together to describe something that is an intellectual scheme. He can get in our mind, he can get in our thoughts. He can warp our thinking, he can make us start believing what is wrong is right and what is right is wrong. That the enemy, the opposition, is crafty. He practices trickery and devices, and he uses designs and plots and intellectual scheming. He can take even scripture itself and twist it and turn it and pull it out of context to where if he gets a hold, the enemy gets a hold in our life, we can start supporting our sin by using scripture itself. The enemy is common. It's contagious and his work is crafty. Warren Weirsby writing about these verses describes throughout the 12 chapters of Nehemiah, nine different tactics that the enemy uses in trying to defeat us. Let me just kind of rattle these off to you here. These different tactics that he uses and maybe you in your life would know right now, that's what he's using in my life. That's what he used last week, he hasn't used that one yet, but I better be alert to it.

Nine different tactics. One is ridicule. You see all of these in the book of Nehemiah, ridicule, plots of war, difficulties within, discouragement, fear, selfishness, compromise. Ridicule, plots of war, difficulties within, discouragement, fear, selfishness, compromise, slander, threats, intrigue. Maybe the enemy has been attacking you and opposition has been attacking you by slandering your witness. Saying things about you that are not true. You feel threatened, discouraged. The consistent companion of a rebuilders is opposition, and Satan is a schemer.

Well, how do we overcome? Let me answer this and we'll be done. We overcome the opposition, number one, when we call out to the Lord. We call out to God. We call out to God. Maybe the whole reason for you being in this room today as you think about rebuilding something is a reminder that in the face of opposition, your first response, your first reaction is not to lash out, but to lean in to God. To go to him, to get on your knees before him, to call out to him. To voice some pointed, precise, passionate prayer. To say to God, "I've got to have your help. You've got to do this." I've said to you already multiple times that opposition is the constant companion of rebuilding. Listen, the most consistent companion, to a re-builder for the glory of God is prayer. It's prayer.

I thought when I came into the book of Nehemiah, I was trying to lay it out over eight or so weeks, and I thought, well, one of those weeks, it's so prevalent in the book of Nehemiah, we have to just focus in on prayer. And we'll take 30 minutes, 40 minutes, and we'll just talk about the power of prayer. And it'll be about prayer and we'll go out of here and it'll be set. We've talked about prayer. But what's happened is I realized that that is not a one-week sermon. What you find in Nehemiah from the first chapter to the last chapter is this constant, consistent companion in Nehemiah's life of prayer. And it's like every week, if we're talking about action or we're talking about patience or we're talking about generosity, we're talking about leadership. You can't do the message without talking about the place of prayer, the place of calling out to God for his help. And you see it here in these verses in chapter four, Sanballat and Tobiah and Geshem, they talk about Nehemiah and their work and make fun of them and ridicule them and talk about a fox knocking down their wall and Nehemiah's immediate response, we've seen this pattern before. His immediate response in verse four chapter four, he turns to God. He says, "Hear, O our God, for we are despised. Turn back their taunt on their own heads and give them up to be plundered in a land where they are captives. 5 Do not cover

their guilt, and let not their sin be blotted out from your sight, for they have provoked you to anger in the presence of the builders." Nehemiah turns with passionate prayer to God and he honestly states the situation. He called out to God. And today we overcome opposition by calling out to God again and again and again.

Number two, we count the cost. We count the cost. What's going to be lost if we quit? What's going to be lost if we don't rebuild? Think about that with me this morning. In the temptation to run up the white flag, what's going to be lost? We count the cost by remembering God and we count the cost by remembering why. It's verse 14 chapter four he says, "And I looked and arose and said to the nobles and to the officials and to the rest of the people, "Do not be afraid of them." Do not be afraid of them. Nehemiah is leading the people. He's speaking to the people. He says, do not be afraid of them. And then he counts the cost. He says, "Remember the Lord who is great and awesome." He's great and awesome. That relationship, that career, those finances, that walk with Christ, I mean whatever it is, that society piece that's broken, and God's calling you to go after it, to rebuild it. Remember who God is in it. He's great, he's awesome and we want him to be known as who is great and who is awesome. That's why it was so critical for the people of God here to win in this situation. God's name was at stake, his people's name were at stake. He says, remember God in this. When he's rallying them there, he doesn't come to them and say, "Hey, look at our tools. Look at our skills. Look how long we've trained. Look how much we've invested in this. Look at how comfortable will be when this is done. Look at how happy we'll be." He says, look, we're going to rebuild these walls. Here's what it's about. Remember God. And then look at what he says. Remember why. Remember the Lord who is great and awesome and fight for your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives, your homes. What's it going to cost you?

What's it going to cost you if you don't rebuild? Your brother, your sister, your family, your homes, your future, the name of God, the glory of God? You realize that the fight you're in to rebuild is so needed by your brothers and your sisters and your homes and your wives and your daughters and your sons. You might say, I know I'm saved, but I kind of fell away from the Lord long time ago And I just come to church and my walk with Christ is kind of what it is. It's not going to be any different than it's always been. Kind of dry and stagnant.

Rebuild it, rebuild it for your wife, for your son, for your home.

You say our nation's too far gone. We'll never see that different. Business is so whacked out. It'll never be any other way. Maybe God's called you to rebuild something in our culture that's broken. Remember the cost, fight for it.

Number three, commit to the plan. God's got a plan. God's shown me what to do. God's leading you. Chapter two verse 17, Nehemiah lays out the plan. He said, "Come, let us build the wall of Jerusalem, that we may no longer suffer derision." 18 And I told them of the hand of my God that had been upon me." In chapter three you see how Nehemiah puts the plan together and he takes people from all different directions and he puts them together, assigns them at each gate, and with conviction they build. They responded to Nehemiah. They said in chapter two verse 18, "he said, let us rise up and build." And then look in chapter four, when the enemy came against them, Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem, the enemy comes against them. Ridicules them, mocks them. Nehemiah prays. The prayer ends at verse five and then in verse six, the testimony is stated here, I want you to say this out loud. Say it around you. Say it to yourself. It's five words. "So we built the wall." So we built the wall. In the face of opposition, their conviction, their spiritual steel in their spiritual spine. They said, we will build the wall.

God is burdened you to rebuild for his glory. Listen, look right here for just a moment. Build the wall.

Number four, complete the job. Complete it. Chapter six verse 15, "So the wall was finished on the twenty-fifth day of the month Elul, in fifty-two days." They built the wall, they completed the job. Now, opposition is real. The enemy's crafty. It's hard and the good hand of the Lord can be on us and it's still be hard. It takes patience, it takes prayer, it takes others, it takes action. We have to stand our ground against the opposition. Don't quit, don't quit.

His name is worth that. His glory's worth that. His honor's worth it. Several years ago, the NFL, National Football League, started keeping a new statistic. They used to just keep these records for running backs of rushing yards for the year. And you could win an award for being the leading rusher of the year as a running back for any NFL team. A few years ago, John Madden, he coined this new phrase, it's called YAC. If you know what that is? Yards after, what? Contact. Yards after contact. And they look at running backs and they started measuring the number of yards that running backs would get after they were initially hit. And they'd keep up with those stats. In 2018 do you know who won the award for yards-after-contact for the NFL? Some of you know. Nick Chubb.

His rookie year, Nick Chubb won the award for most yards after contact. He averaged on every play that he ran the ball, once he was hit, he averaged an additional 4.3 yards. More than Derek Henry, more than any other running back. Why would they measure that? Because, in a way, it has a way of measuring toughness, of measuring strength. Of measuring the ability to be hit and keep on going. And why I'm standing before you today is I'm calling you to win the prize of yards after contact. When the enemy hits you, and the enemy opposes you, and the enemy fights against you. Are you going to keep on going? By the power of God you can.

I want you to bow your heads with me and our band's gonna come and we're going to close this morning with just a call. The most consistent companion for rebuilding, it's gotta be prayer. And we've got time in this room. We've got the ability in this room, we've got access in this room for you to use this moment that the spirit of God is speaking to your heart to seal what the spirit of God is doing today with prayer. And I want to invite you to come. Upper section, lower section, all over this room. Use the front of this room as a place to kneel, a place to pray. Your movement here will be an indicator to the enemy and an indicator to the opposition that you are going to God. I invite you to come. You're rebuilding something and you're just like, I want to go to God right now and pray about it. Take it to him. Let's stand on our feet. Heads bowed, you sing if you'd like, pray for those around you. Search your heart. Come and kneel across this room. Seek the Lord in prayer. If you need to be saved today, give your life to Jesus. I'll be right here at the front and you could come and I could help you today. Turn your life to Christ and trust him as your Lord and Savior. Come now and pray. Meet me here at the front. We can pray together as well. You come.