

Rebuild

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February 2nd, 2020

Let's open our Bibles this morning to the Old Testament book of Nehemiah. We're going to spend the next eight weeks studying through the book of Nehemiah. I want to ask you to spend a few minutes with me right now in praying for our study through Nehemiah. God, we prepare our hearts to hear what he wants to get through this Old Testament book. As we pray together in just a moment, also, I want to ask you to pray for our Men's Conference that will take place here next Friday night and Saturday morning. Many of you have registered already. If you haven't registered, men, college students, teenagers, do that today before you leave the property. You don't have to wait until you get home. You can do it online, but in the Commons at the next steps area, there's some people there with a computer and they'll you get you signed up today before you walk away. College students, you can go for half of what our normal price would be and if that's a problem, see me, let me know. I don't want that to stand in the way of you being here. We'd love for you to be a part of that. Ken Whitten will be our speaker, he's a pastor from Tampa, Florida. He'll speak Friday night and Saturday morning. I hope that if you haven't signed up, you will and you'll be here next Friday night. I'm looking forward to being right here in this room for that. Let's pray together. Would you bow with me, and pray specifically for a minute for our Men's Conference.

Now would you take a moment to pray for our study in Nehemiah? You may not have any idea what the book's about. You may know already lots of detail. Invite the Holy Spirit to work in our church and in our lives individually. That God's plan would be accomplished for our study through this book. Father, we bow before you and we've gathered here, we've sung, we've given, we're opening our Bibles and Father, we're asking you to go beyond anything that we can plan for or prepare for and do eternal work. You change hearts, Holy Spirit. You're the convictor, the teacher, the encourager, and we ask that you would be active here. Be free to work. I pray that you'd search our hearts and see if there's anything that might be there that would quench your work. We want to be open to you today, obedient, usable, work through us. Make your word effective in our hearts and in our lives today. Over these next few weeks Lord, I pray that you would work in such a way that things that are broken could be rebuilt. Lord, that you would use this maybe to even be involved in serving in some way that those places out there and lives out there, something out there that falls short of your glory, that we might be used to be a rebuilder. We submit our lives to you and ask you to be free to work in this place. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall. Humpty Dumpty had a great fall. All the King's horses and all the King's men couldn't put Humpty together again. That is something that every English speaking child learns at some point in their life. It doesn't matter if you grew up in Alabama or Georgia, New York or Florida, if you know the English language, somewhere along the way, somebody is going to put you to bed or rock you in a rocking chair or hold your hand and say that. And you learn it. It's cute rhyme, cute nursery rhyme. I can remember laughing and thinking about that. Most of us maybe have in our mind something the shape of a egg when we think of Humpty Dumpty. I can remember at some point along the way thinking with giggles in my mind, Humpty

Dumpty sat on a wall. Humpty Dumpty had a great fall. All the King's horses, all the King's men couldn't put Humpty together again.

That's sad. That's really sad. Who teaches us things like that? Even going as far as to think at one point, there's a second verse, right? I mean, surely there's, there's more to the story. Something that we could add to that to get us out of this hopeless situation for Humpty Dumpty. So I came up with one. Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall. Humpty Dumpty had a great fall. All the King's horses and all the Kings men couldn't put Humpty together again. Along came a carpenter who knew what to do, picked up all the pieces and apply Elmers glue. I wrote that myself. A lot of situations in our life feel like the single verse of Humpty Dumpty. Broken things that we would believe today will never be put back together again. It's much more real than a nursery rhyme. As we come to the book of Nehemiah, it is a book of hope because the book of Nehemiah shows us that if we're committed to the glory of God, miracles can happen. Broken things can be put back together.

Take just a moment to think about what might be broken in your life that God might want to put back together beginning today, this very day. You might look at your devotional life and say, "Hey, people think I'm pretty faithful. I'm kind of out there with my faith, but honestly, my devotional life is dead dry. I know I have a saving relationship with Jesus, but the intimacy with Christ, I don't care that much about talking to him. He probably doesn't care that much for me, it's just broken." You could look at your family and say, there's some things about my family right now that are broken and seem hopeless. It might be a marriage. And it could be that others know that, but it could be that you know it. It's broken and you're not sure it can be put back together again. It could be finances. You look at the bottom line. You look at the future and you see a pattern and a place that you're in financially in your life, and there's nothing there that you would say brings glory to God. It could be a career. There was a track, there was a path, there was a route, there was a goal, and you'd look at your career and say, "Broken." Well, through God's grace and God's mercy and his hand of power, broken things can be rebuilt. Relationships can be rebuilt. Friendships can be rebuilt. Devotional life or career, finances, areas in our life that are a part of everyday life can be rebuilt.

Nehemiah is a story of how one person burdened for the glory of God can be used by God to rebuild in miraculous ways. Spoiler alert, the book of Nehemiah tells the story of the walls of Jerusalem. The Israelites had been in captivity, scattered away from Jerusalem. They were operating as slaves to other governments, and they had come back home to Jerusalem. The remnant had gathered back into Jerusalem, and through a chain of events, they had rebuilt the temple in Jerusalem, but the walls were still destroyed around the city. And even though they had the temple rebuilt, every day when they woke up, the first thing they would see and sense would be, "Our walls are broken down. We are vulnerable to the attack of the enemy, where the laughingstock of the surrounding countries and nations, and what would give us a picture of sovereignty and security is not there. We're just out there. We're defeated." God speaks to Nehemiah's heart. He breaks his heart about their condition and the walls are rebuilt in 52 days. Miracles can happen when one person is committed to the glory of God.

Over the next few minutes, I want to begin this process of maybe God identifying in our lives what needs to be rebuilt and how he might begin to rebuild something in our own life. But I want to go a step more. It could be today in this room, on this day, and what a unique day it is. 02 / 02 / 2020. On the second day of the second month of 2020, God might speak to you and put a call on your life that there is something broken in our culture, something broken in our

nation, something broken in our world that God would call you to. That he would call you to serve him in a way that down the road could lead symbolically to the walls being rebuilt. It could lead your life, could be the life that God uses to his glory exalted.

From time to time we hear things that causes us pain. Maybe we hear something in the tech world and we say, "Wow, why is it like that all the time?" This week I heard, may of you in this room would be familiar with the social media platform of tick tock. You won't find me there, so don't go looking. But I listen and I know a little. Here's what I heard this week, on the platform of tick tock, a massive platform for pro-life causes and information was banned. It has since, I understand, been reinstated because of public outcry. But the first thing I heard when I heard that tick tock saw that particular issue, pro-life issue as something that they would ban, I thought to myself, "Where's the believer?" Where's God's servant that might be engaged in the social media world to the extent that they could champion something that brings glory to God. We have those kinds of experiences in the political realm where we can begin to become critical about some direction of our country or some direction of our County or some direction of our state. And I would just say to you sitting in this room of multiple generations, could it be that God would say on this day, 02/02/2020, I'm calling you to serve for my glory and my name.

Let's look together in Nehemiah verse one. He says.

"The words of Nehemiah the son of Hacaliah.

Now it happened in the month of Chisleu, in the twentieth year, as I was in Susa the citadel,"

I've read this book dozens of times. I've preached through the book before. I have never been stopped by those first three words there, but now it happened. It really jumped out at me because it was like Nehemiah wasn't just keeping a daily journal, it was like he was looking back saying there was an event. There was a time, there was a moment, there was a defining moment in my life. It happened. "Now it happened in the month of Kislev." He knew the month. He knew the year. He knew the place. He knew who came to see him. He knew the question. He knew the answer. He knew what happened in his heart. There was a moment in time where God worked.

"Now it happened in the month of Kislev." That would be like October, November on our calendar.

in the twentieth year, as I was in Susa the citadel,² that Hanani, one of my brothers, came with certain men from Judah. And I asked them concerning the Jews who escaped, who had survived the exile, and concerning Jerusalem.³ And they said to me, "The remnant there in the province who had survived the exile is in great trouble and shame. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates are destroyed by fire."

Nehemiah's Prayer

⁴As soon as I heard these words I sat down and wept and mourned for days, and I continued fasting and praying before the God of heaven.⁵ And I said, "O LORD God of heaven, the great and awesome God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments,⁶ let your ear be attentive and your eyes open, to hear the prayer of your servant that I now pray before you day and night for the people of Israel your servants, confessing the sins of the people of Israel, which we have sinned against you. Even I

and my father's house have sinned. ⁷ We have acted very corruptly against you and have not kept the commandments, the statutes, and the rules that you commanded your servant Moses. ⁸ Remember the word that you commanded your servant Moses, saying, 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the peoples, ⁹ but if you return to me and keep my commandments and do them, though your outcasts are in the uttermost parts of heaven, from there I will gather them and bring them to the place that I have chosen, to make my name dwell there.' ¹⁰ They are your servants and your people, whom you have redeemed by your great power and by your strong hand. ¹¹ O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of your servant, and to the prayer of your servants who delight to fear your name, and give success to your servant today, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man."

Now I was cupbearer to the king."

Important last phrase of chapter one. I think it's important because of what's about to transpire. He's about to lead the people. He's about to serve the Lord to the point of where the walls would be rebuilt, and he doesn't state here that he was in charge or that he was trained or that he was skilled. He just says, here's who I am. I'm a cup bearer to the King. It was a trusted position. The cup bearer to the King would be the one that stood between some poisonous drink or some poisonous food and the King. It was the one that made sure that what came to the King could be trusted. So he was trusted. He had access to the King. He was in the presence of the King day after day after day. And it says, if Nehemiah lets us see that I wasn't broken or burdened about this because I was in some position that I should be involved in it. It was just something God did in my heart.

I want to break these verses apart into four or five categories here that show us kind of this process, this place of getting to a point to where God would use us to rebuild something, where God would do a work in our own hearts to rebuild something that's broken in our life. Notice first of all, the description that hides God's glory. There's a description here that hides God's glory. He asked the question in these first few verses about the Jewish people and the exiles and how they were doing. In verse three, his family and friends, they respond and give him a brief report. Verse three, "They said to me," and they describe where things are. "The remnant there in the province who had survived the exile is in great," and lets stop right there. What if you could fill in the blank right there? We don't know what's on the next line there. They're there. They've survived the exile, and they are in great, what? What if in that blank we put in there today, not knowing what was coming, what if we put there, "They are in great spirits." "They're in a great position." "They're demonstrating great joy." "They're showing great strength." "God's great power is active in their life." "There is great hope." But what does it say? They survived the exile. "They are in great trouble and shame. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down and its gates are destroyed." Trouble, shame, broken, destroyed. The description of the people's place is one that hides the glory of God.

Nobody would look at the exiles in Jerusalem and say, "You guys have a mighty God." "You guys have a powerful God. Your God is awesome. We want to bow down and worship your God. We want to follow your God." They would look at them as laughingstock. In fact, you read through the book of Nehemiah and you actually see that, that other leaders of other countries would mock them and laugh at them because of the condition that they were in. And this description describes a setting where the glory of God is being hidden. Now bring it home to our lives, is there something in your life that is broken to the point that it is hiding the glory of God? When you look at your finances and the way you handle money or giving or saving or

generosity, your attitudes toward financial resources, would you say even in my financial life, I see the glory of God? A relationship that you have, a friendship that you have. Would you say this, these friendships, this relationship, brings glory to God or would you have to say in that broken relationship, there's nothing about God being demonstrated in this relationship. How about your devotional life? Is your devotional life, your walk with Christ, your intimacy with Christ. You're abiding in his word, abiding in him. Does it bring glory to God? Think about your marriage. When you look at your marriage. Is our marriage difficult at times? Yes. Challenging at times? Yes. Praise be the Lord that our marriage in some way is bringing honor and glory to the name of the Lord. The situation that we have here of what was broken was a description of a people where the glory of God was being hidden.

Number two, we see a condition that burdens the heart. When Nehemiah gets this report, in verse four he says, "As soon as I heard these words, I sat down and wept and mourned for days and I continued fasting and praying before the God of heaven." The condition of the people, the condition of the walls, the condition of their nation, they're in Jerusalem. It broke his heart. It burdened his heart. He cared for the people, God's people, and he cared for God's glory. When he heard this news, he heard this description, it crushed him. It broke him. He wept. He mourned. He fasted, he prayed. He sat down. Warren Wiersbe writes about Nehemiah and he said, "The key to success in Nehemiah was that there was a person that cared for the people and cared for the glory of God. Conditions that would burden our heart would be those conditions that rob God of his glory and rob God's people of the joy of walking in God's glory. For our lives to be rebuilt, for any area in our life to be rebuilt, it must start with our passion for God's glory. We must reach a point where our burden for God's glory is greater than our desire for our own benefit.

Sometimes we could look at some situation that we're in, maybe we look at our personal health or we look at our finances or we look at a marriage or we look at a relationship and we say, "Man, I just, I got to get these finances in order because if I can get this right, and I can put back this amount of money, just think where I could be one day. I would be able to buy these things." "Or if I could just start working out and pumping some iron and doing some cardio, just think how good I'll look because spring is coming." What if we saw places in our life where there are opportunities to bring God glory, not as change that was needed to make us better, but as change that was needed to bring God glory. I want this, yes, it will be good, but I want this most because of what it means for your name, Lord.

There's a reaction number three that reveals our identity. Verse four he's praying, he's fasting, he's mourning, he's weeping, he's broken, he's burdened. He said, "Oh Lord God of heaven, the great and awesome God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments. Let your ear be attentive and your eyes open to hear the prayer of your," What? Say it. What is it? "Servant." Do you know when you pick up books about Nehemiah, the number one topic that's talked about when you go to Nehemiah is the subject of leadership. You find it over and over again. Here's a beautiful picture of how to lead. Here's how a godly leader operates. Here's leadership. There is leadership that takes place here, but I want you to see that the way that Nehemiah identified himself was not as, "Hey, a leader has arrived. I got this. We're going to take care of this." Nehemiah was weeping, sitting down, fasting morning before the Lord and says, "Be attentive to your servant." Be attentive to your servant. And he shows his dependence as a servant by praying. One of the great lessons that we have to learn over and over and over again about Christian maturity is that we are not

more spiritually mature because we are more independent. We are more spiritually mature when we recognize our dependence.

I can't put this back together. We can't bring our marriage back together. I can't be the man I need to be. I can't walk with Christ the way I need to walk with Christ. I can't get these finances ordered. I can't build this relationship back. God, I got to have your help. I'm your servant. I'm dependent on you. And today we walk away from this room you might be thinking, "Well, what do I do first? Yes, I know something's broken. I know something needs to be put back together. I know this is not bringing God's glory. Where do I start?" It's right here. Where we start is identifying ourselves as servants of the Lord who are willing to go first in prayer to Almighty God. There's so many opportunities that we have. On any day, anytime, you can take a course, you can attend a conference, you can see a counselor, you can act. But don't miss the fact that Nehemiah's first act and repeated act was prayer. This prayer, "Lord, help me." In fact, in the book of Nehemiah on 12 different specific occasions, prayer is mentioned. HB Charles writes, "When we work, we work. When we pray, God works." And there are things that we can do to work. And we can work and we can work and we can work, but Nehemiah shows us that our first work is to do the work of prayer. John Bunyan wrote, "You can do more than pray after you have prayed, but you cannot do more than pray until you have prayed." Nehemiah did do some things after he prayed, but he did nothing until he prayed. And so today a starting place for us to rebuild something broken in our life, to rebuild something out there beyond us that maybe God's calling us to do is to find ourselves burdened to the point of mourning, weeping, broken, fasting, praying. God, help us.

Next we see a petition that revives the future. That there'd be hope for the children of Israel. Listen to his prayer, "Oh Lord God of heaven, the great and awesome God who keeps covenant and steadfast love." Where do you start in a prayer to rebuild broken things? You start with praise. Lord, you're the great one. You're the good one. You're the powerful one. You're the promise-making, promise-keeping God. You are a God of steadfast love. You're a God that keeps covenant. It's such a great model of prayer here for us in our life of rebuilding broken things. It's to make sure that we began acknowledging who God is. And then there's confession. To confess simply means, to agree. And to confess our sin to God means that we agree with God that what was wrong is wrong. God, you say this is wrong and I'm agreeing with you. I'm confessing to you. Yes, I have sin. I am wrong. And that's what Nehemiah does. He says, your people have sinned, and he goes on. He takes it a step further and he says, "Even I and my father's house have sinned. We have acted very corruptly against you and have not kept the commandments." Nehemiah doesn't point fingers. He doesn't point at circumstances. He doesn't say, "God, these people of yours, they've sinned." It's not this blame game of what's going on out here. But he says, "Yes, there's some wrong done here, but let me, Lord, bring myself into this. Even I, in my father's house, we've sinned, we've broken our commands." If we're ever going to rebuild something for the glory of God, there has to be a time where we're willing to humble ourselves in confession of the sin of our own heart. Just like Romans says, "We all have fallen short of the glory of God."

If there's any hope that our lives can be rebuilt, there's an acknowledgement of who God is and there's an acknowledgement of what we've done. Notice the remembrance in this prayer. Verse nine, "Remember the word that you commanded your servant Moses saying, if you are unfaithful, I will." And then he goes on and he's remembering in his prayer life what God has promised. A key to us rebuilding something is to remember what God has promised, to let those promises of God be buoys in our life. They guide us. To say, "Lord, you've promised this.

You've promised this, you've promised this, and I'm praying, Lord, that you will work according to your promises. You will work according to your character. You will work according to what you describe as being your will." And then he asks, he praises. He confesses, he remembers, and he asks. He says, "Oh Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of your servants who delight to fear your name," and listen to this specific request, "Give success to your servant today and grant him mercy in the sight of this man". At least four months would pass before he would ever have the conversation with the King. And I mentioned that, I'd probably say it again next week, but I mentioned that to just say there's time. There's patience, there's waiting, but the praying is taking place.

Night and day, he prayed, fasting, mourning, praying. But he asked specifically for success before the King. So in your praying, lay it out there. "Lord, restore this friendship." "Lord, would you help me manage," and you can just put those specifics that you think would bring glory to God about some area of your life. And then last, a disposition that fuels our hope. I think today would be a loss if we walked away from this room with something broken in our life and have no hope. And what I want you to see today, cling to today, grab a hold of today is that there is hope. In verse 11, "Oh Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of your servants who delight to fear your name." Delighting in the Lord is the first place for us to be when it comes to God doing the work of rebuilding. It's not delighting in the things that we're trying to fix. You with me? It's not delighting and being rich. It's not delighting in your husband. It's not delighting in your friend. It's not delighting in your reputation. It's not delighting in your security for the future. The place where we've got to start is to delight in the Lord. We start right there. Psalm 37:4, "Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart."

And so today, wherever your delight is, we got to make sure that the delights not in idols, that the delight is not in our kids, or the delights not in our spouse at the beginning. That will come. We've got to go to God and say, "God, we confess. I've put some things in front of you. I've put some idols ahead of you." And we need a disposition that fuels our hope and that disposition that fuels hope is a delight in Almighty God. The only way I know to get there is just to confess it to him. Ask him for it. Ask him to change our heart, to mature our heart and let him birth this fresh new delight in our life.

A few weeks ago in the Life Building, Pastor Vic preached and he gave to us from God's word how Jesus shows up in every book of the Bible. When he came to the book of Nehemiah, he said, "In Nehemiah, Jesus is the rebuilder of broken walls." And today I want you to hear that Jesus Christ is the rebuilder of your broken walls. Whatever's broken in your life, Jesus Christ is where we must start. He's the builder. He's the rebuilder. He's the one that can change a heart and change a life. So to close, I've got a better second verse to Humpty Dumpty. Okay? Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall. Humpty Dumpty had a great fall. All the King's horses and all the King's men couldn't put Humpty together again. Along came a carpenter who knew what to do. He had something better than Elmers glue. He gave his life on a cross to pay for our sin and rose from the dead with power that can make all things new again.

Listen, what is broken can be put back together if you are committed to the glory of God. It starts right there. Pray with me. Father, in this room today, this message has been raw to a lot of hearts, more than I know, because Lord, the realness of broken things is so present. And Father, I want to ask you for your name's sake, that you would begin in life after life after life on this day to rebuild what is broken. I pray Father for the person who doesn't know Jesus in this room, that they need to start right there. That they would call out for grace and mercy,

forgiveness. That their life would be turned over to you so that they could start with a foundation of Jesus. I pray people would be saved in this room. I pray, Lord, for your call on people's lives to be recognized. Maybe something that won't come to fruition, Lord, for 10, 20, 30 years, but it was this day that you spoke and called. Lord, I pray that you would move on hearts of people to begin today praying. Would begin today praying for you to rebuild something, somewhere in their life. In Jesus' name. Amen.

You look this way, our band is going to come and we're going to close with a song. I want to invite you to respond today. Just like Nehemiah where it says, "As soon as I heard these words," before even you hear a note play, you could just come from your seats right now and just begin to kneel in this room and pray. There is a burden on your heart for something to be rebuilt in your life or around you. Come right now. Come right now. Some of you need to be saved and give your life to Jesus. I'm going to be right here at the front. Some of you sense God's call on your life right now, and you need to share that. You need to just kind of draw the line in the sand. You say, "I don't know what it means, but I'm saying today, I believe this is what God's doing." Listen, I've said it again and I'll continue to say it, this room is built for response. It'll be a matter of seconds for you to come from the top there to right here. Let's do business with God. Let's not ignore what the spirit of God is saying to your heart right now. Let's pray. Let's let God have a chance to rebuild what's broken in our lives. Would you stand to your feet. Would you pray, sing if you like. Let's respond to the spirit of the Lord right now.