

Nehemiah 3

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[0 : 00] We've preached through this. It's been several years ago. We went through portions of Nehemiah. We may have made our way all the way through Nehemiah. On a Wednesday night, it was, man, 2017, 2018, somewhere in that nature.

It was pre-COVID. But now, at that time, as we were doing it, I was preaching through the Bible on Sunday nights.

I was preaching through books on Sunday mornings. And then I was preaching through different books on Wednesday nights. And so then somewhere about that time, I said, well, that needs to change. So I just started combining Sunday nights and Wednesday nights and just kind of building one message right after another from our own mental abilities.

So if you were here when you went through it, you will understand. This is my favorite chapter in all of the book of Nehemiah. It's Nehemiah chapter 3. It is probably the chapter that most people like to run from in the book of Nehemiah.

It's much like why I love Matthew chapter 1. It's not because I love to pronounce or enunciate all of the names we find here.

[1 : 07] But it is the hidden gems and the truth that we can see in it. And in particular, this passage in particular in Nehemiah 3 and its context and exactly what the Lord is doing here.

So before we get into it, let's pray. Father, thank you so much. Thank you for your goodness that you express towards us. Thank you for the mercy that we can find in your presence.

And Lord, we are so thankful to be able to gather together. We're thankful for your word. We're thankful for the ability to be able to study it with one another. Lord, to grow in our understanding of it and to grow in our relationship with one another and with you.

And what a joy it is to serve you and to love you and worship you alongside brothers and sisters in Christ. So as we open up the word of God tonight, we pray that we would see it in its beauty. We'd see it in its simplicity. But Lord, we'd also see it with its calling and its challenges upon us and the encouragement that it brings to our lives. So Father, we pray you'd be glorified through our reading of the word.

[2 : 11] We pray that you help us to be edified through our studying of it. And Lord, may we be moved to be used by you as you see that. We ask it all in Jesus' name. Amen.

So for context, we have to go back just a little bit into the second chapter. And I know it's been some time. So let's go back into Nehemiah 2. Let's pick it up in verse 17 and read kind of the end of chapter 2.

And then we'll get right into chapter 3 and we'll look at chapter 3 its entirety. There's a lot of repetition, a lot of names. I'm sure I'll stumble over many of them. But I will tell you thank you in advance before we get there.

So Nehemiah 2, starting at verse 17, says, Then I said to them, this is after Nehemiah went around the wall. He's come to Jerusalem. He's come with letters from the king. He has the authority. He is a political leader. He is not a spiritual leader. So he's not a priest. He's not a Levite. We believe he's probably of some royal descent because his fathers are buried in Jerusalem.

[3 : 10] So it means he's probably not of royal descent, but he's at least of the family and tribe of Judah, most people believe. But he was born in captivity. He was the cupbearer to the king. He heard about the condition of the walls around Jerusalem, was moved to the Lord, prayed about it.

The Lord opened up opportunities. So now he's here. All right. So he went around. He inspected the walls by night. Didn't tell anybody what was going on. And then he tells them in verse 17, Then I said to them, You see the bad situation we are in, that Jerusalem is desolate and its gates burned by fire?

Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem so that we would no longer be a reproach. I told them how the hand of my God had been favorable to me and also about the king's words which he had spoken to me. Then they said, Let us arise and build.

So they put their hands to the good work. But when Sambalat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite official and Geshem the Arab heard it, they mocked us and despised us and said, What is this thing you are doing?

Are you rebelling against the king? So I answered them and said to them, The God of heaven will give us success. Therefore, we, his servants, will arise and build. But you have no portion, right, or memorial in Jerusalem.

[4 : 15] So that's our context. That's the background. Now, he has just told them what the Lord has put on his heart. And so now I want you to see tonight what it looks like to put your hand to the good work. Putting our hands to the good work.

Then Eliashib, the high priest, arose with his brothers, the priest, and built the sheep gate. They consecrated it and hung its doors. They consecrated the wall and the tower of the hundred and the tower of Hanel.

Next to him the men of Jericho built, and next to them Zechurah the son of Emre built. Now the sons of Hassanah built the fish gate. They laid its beams and hung its doors with its bolts and bars. Next to them Merimoth, the son of Uriah, the son of Hakaz, made repairs.

And next to him Meshulam, the son of Berechiah, the son of Meshezabel, made repairs. And next to him Zadok, the son of Bana, also made repairs. Moreover, next to him the Tekoites made repairs, but their nobles did not support the work of their masters.

Joadiah, the son of Paseah, and Meshulam, the son of Besodiah, repaired the old gate. They laid its beams and hung its doors with its bolts and its bars. And next to them Melatiah, the Gibeonite, and Jadon, the Maranathite, the men of Gibeon and of Mizpah, also made repairs for the official seat of the governor of the province beyond the river.

[5 : 30] Next to him Uziel, the son of Herahiah, of the goldsmiths, made repairs. And next to him Hananiah, one of the perfumers, made repairs. And they restored Jerusalem as far as the broad wall.

Next to them Raphiah, the son of Herah, the official of half the district of Jerusalem, made repairs.

Next to them Jediah, the son of Harumath, made repairs opposite his house.

And next to him Hattush, the son of Hashbaniah, made repairs. And next to him Shalom, the son of Halohesh, the official of half the district of Jerusalem, made repairs.

He and his daughters. Hanan and the inhabitants of Zenoa repaired the valley gate. They built it and hung its doors with its bolts and its bars, and a thousand cubits of the wall to the refuse gate. Malchijah, the son of Rechab, the official of the district of Beth-Hacherim, repaired the refuse gate. He built it and hung its doors with its bolts and its bars. Shalom, the son of Koh-Hozah, the official of the district of Mizpah, repaired the fountain gate.

[6 : 45] He built it, covered it, and hung its doors with its bolts and its bars, and the wall of the pool of Shalah. To the king's garden, as far as the steps that descended from the city of David. After him, Nehemiah, the son of Azbuk, official of half the district of Beth-Zerah, made repairs as far as the point opposite the tombs of David.

And as far as the artificial pool in the house of the mighty men. After him, the Levites carried out repairs under Rahum, the son of Bani. And next to him, Hashbaiah, the official of half the district of Kali, carried out repairs for his district.

And after him, their brothers carried out repairs under Bavi, the son of Hinnadad, official of the other half of the district of Kali. Next to him, Ezra, the son of Jeshua, the official of Mizpah, repaired another section in front of the ascent of the armory at the angle.

And after him, Barak, the son of Zabai, zealously repaired another section from the angle to the doorway of the house of Elisheb, the high priest. And after him, Merimoth, the son of Uriah, the son of Hechaz, repaired another section from the doorway of Elisheb's house, even as far as the end of his house.

After him, the priests, the men of the valley, carried out repairs. And after them, Benjamin. Why can't they all be named Benjamin, by the way? What a good name, right? Praise God for Benjamin found right there. Then there's Benjamin.

[8 : 05] And Hashab carried out repairs in front of their house. After them, Azariah, the son of Messiah, son of Ananiah, carried out repairs beside his house. After him, Benui, the son of

Hinnadad, repaired another section from the house of Azariah, as far as the angle and as far as the corner.

Palau, the son of Uzziah, made repairs in front of the angle and the tower projecting from the upper house of the king, which is by the court of the guard. And after him, Padaiah, the son of Parash, made repairs.

The temple servants, living in Ophel, made repairs as far as the front of the water gate toward the east and projecting tower. After them, the Decoitites repaired another section in front of the great projecting tower and as far as the wall of Ophel.

Above the horse gate, the priests carried out repairs, each in front of his house. After them, Zedat, the son of Emer, carried out the repairs in front of his house. And after him, Shemaiah, the son of Shekemiah, the keeper of the east gate, carried out repairs.

And after him, Hananiah, the son of Shalamiah, and Hanan, the sixth son of Zelophe, repaired another section. After him, Meshulam, the son of Barakai, carried out repairs in front of his own quarters.

[9 : 12] And after him, Machizah, one of the goldsmiths, carried out repairs as far as the house of the temple servants of the merchants in front of the inspection gate. And as far as the upper room of the corner.

Between the upper room of the corner and the sheep gate, the goldsmiths and the merchants carried out repairs. Nehemiah gives us a recording of a number of names and groups of individuals. There are certainly a number of unnamed individuals that are also in part of this work. But he begins his record at the sheep gate.

He names ten different gates in this record. He names a number of different places from towers to the angle. The angle was a very important military feature found in the walls of Jerusalem.

But he starts at the sheep gate and he goes counterclockwise around Jerusalem until he gets back to the sheep gate. And he makes his way all the way around. Warren Wiersbe has a great commentary, by the way, if you ever want to take time to read it, on the representation of each of these ten gates and how every individual ought to have some of these gates in their life.

[10 : 17] The sheep gate's awesome. It's a very pointed picture because it was the gate by which they would bring in the lambs that were to be slaughtered. It was the gate on the northernmost portion of Jerusalem.

It was therefore one of the most important gates for security purposes because that's where they were the most vulnerable. If you think about it, that's where Israel had fallen. And by this time, we know that Israel has fallen.

So the nations have kind of come into that area. But anyway, actually, they've all fallen. So all the nations are to the north of them, and that was kind of their most vulnerable position because geographically, if you're looking at the nation of Israel, the southern portion you get into the Dead Sea and all the kind of wilderness area.

There's really nobody inhabiting down there. It's really uninhabitable and unfarmable. So anyway, long story short, northern portion is more important for security purposes.

So it's telling when you read his kind of account of those gates, even the refuse gates. The refuse gate is the gate that will take you to the Valley of Hinnom. You know the Valley of Hinnom is Gehenna.

[11 : 19] That's where they would take their refuse and their waste, and they would put it in a valley, and they would set it on fire. It is the place that Jesus pointed to quite often to describe hell.

It was like the Valley of Hinnom or Gehenna. Now, I love what Warren Wiersbe says. Every believer needs a refuse gate. That is where you take the things which devalue you, and you throw it out, and you burn it. I love that, by the way.

It's a wonderful thing. He said we all need a refuse gate because if you don't burn it in the Valley, it will consume you internally. But anyway, great, great content.

Warren Wiersbe had put out there. I encourage you to read at some point. But I want you to see tonight what it looks like to put our hands to the good work. I love this chapter, even though the names are difficult, and it seems so mundane.

But I love it because it comes to us with such poignant simplicity, and it shows us a lot of things. It would be very easy to say, okay, God put it in the heart of Nehemiah.

[12:14] Nehemiah came, and he shared his burden with the people, and they accomplished a work. We know that when we read on a little bit further, this work is accomplished in 54 days. We have a tendency to say, well, Nehemiah is the builder of the walls of Jerusalem.

Here in just a minute, we'll refute that. We'll refute that, and we'll see exactly who built the walls. But we kind of put all of our focus on Nehemiah as he who rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem. And that is only really 54 days of a lifetime given to ministry in that area.

Most of it politically involved, but it's still ministry nonetheless, because we know that he was there 13 years the first time before he went back to King Artaxerxes, and then he returned again later. But in those 13 years, the only thing we really focus on is the first 54 days in which they rebuild the walls. But that is something that happens very quickly. But we could just move beyond it and say, well, the walls were rebuilt.

That's awesome. But I love Nehemiah being the political figure he is. He records these names for historical purposes. He records them for recognition purposes, but he also is moved by the Lord God Almighty to record them for our purpose, and we can be edified by them.

[13:24] I want you to see here as we put our hands to the good work, the good work that was before these people was the reconstruction of the walls of Jerusalem. We know it needed to take place. One of the gates that is repaired is later referred to.

It has now been walled up. It was walled up after Jerusalem fell long into it. But it is the gate that is referred to in present day as the golden gate.

It is the gate in which Christ entered on the triumphal entry. It is the gate in which he rode through as they laid the palm branches down and said, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. That gate is repaired in this chapter. And we understand that. There are some pictures there. It is a wonderful thing. But I want you to see, too, that any work that the Lord God leads us to is a good work.

What does it look like to put our hands to the good work? The first thing I want you to notice in this passage is that this was a work of direction. It was a work of direction. That is, they had focus to their work.

[14:30] This is why we have to read the latter part of chapter 2. And I've said this before, but it bears repeating. By the time Nehemiah gets to Jerusalem, the walls of Jerusalem have been down since the fall before the Babylonian captivity.

Now, the Babylonian captivity, when the walls were knocked down by Nebuchadnezzar's army, there's 70 years of Babylonian captivity, and then there's another 90 years by the time Nehemiah shows up in Jerusalem.

So it's a good way of saying, for 90 years, since the decree by King Cyrus for whosoever wants to can return back, for 90 years, people have been living with broken down walls.

For 90 years, the walls have been in a terrible condition. For 90 years, people have lived in Jerusalem, though not many. One of the things that Nehemiah does is he reoccupies the city. The majority of the reason why the city was not really densely occupied was because the walls were in such disrepair. People were living in a countryside. They were living in their own homeland. The Benjamites went to the land of Benjamin, and all likewise.

[15:46] They all went back to their homeland. They had rebuilt the temple. The temple was reconstructed, though it was much smaller. However, the temple had been reconstructed. The sacrificial system had been restarted.

Ezra had already come and kind of reorganized the priest some, you know, 13 to 18 years prior to the arrival of Nehemiah. But for 90 years, people have been living in this land out of captivity, not including the Babylonian captivity, out of captivity with the walls in the same condition.

And so that's a good way of saying that they were not going to rebuild the walls because they look bad. They were not going to rebuild the walls because of security purposes.

If it had been a security concern, they would have rebuilt the walls as soon as they started the reconstruction on the temple. Because if you remember, when they started the reconstruction on the temple, the very first thing they did was lay the foundation of the altar, rebuild the altar, and start the sacrifices.

We get this in the book of Ezra, before any of the temple walls were built. So the altar is there, the incense and the sacrifices are burned upon the altar. And as soon as the smoke from the offerings on the altar begins to arise, the people around Jerusalem, not the Jewish people, but the enemies

of the Jewish people begin to complain and murmur, and they stall the construction of the temple for a number of years until the prophets Haggai and Zechariah show up and they encourage the people to start again.

[17 : 15] So if it was security purposes, then the moment the enemy started speaking up, they would have rebuilt the walls and said, now that we have secure walls, let's rebuild our temple. So they were not going to rebuild the walls because of security concerns.

They were not going to rebuild the walls because of appearance. They had gotten comfortable with it. This is all that any of them had ever known. This was the new normal. We looked at this, how we can have things in our life that do not belong there, and we can just say, this is how it is.

And we can get very, very comfortable with things that do not belong and things that are out of place. We've looked at that. But they didn't begin to work until Nehemiah showed them that this was dishonoring not to them.

And we looked at this before, but that this was a disgrace and a defamation to the name of the Lord God Almighty. So now the walls began to be representation of the holiness of God.

The walls were a picture of their rebellion, we saw this, rather than being a picture of their restoration. For one of the judgments that God had declared is that when the people rebel, the walls would be destroyed, and people would go by and shake their head and say, this is what happens when people walk in unfaithfulness before the Lord God Almighty.

[18 : 26] And so they were still living with that pictured rebellion instead of living as if their lives had been restored through God's loving kindness and his mercy and his faithfulness.

So the walls meant so much more than just security or appearance. And what Nehemiah is, Nehemiah is not the builder of the wall. You need to understand that. Nehemiah is the man God uses to refocus the people to rebuild the wall.

The Nehemiah mentioned in this chapter is not the Nehemiah that the book is named after.

Because he's got a different dad. As far as we know, Nehemiah, the political leader, never does work on the wall.

He leads the people, he stands behind the people. We'll find in the next couple of chapters that he is there beside the trumpeters that if an enemy arises over here, they'll blow the trumpet and people will show up. And if it's over here, he'll blow the trumpet.

So how can he be on the lookout and be rebuilding the wall at the same time? Nehemiah is not the one who rebuilds the wall. These people listed are the ones who rebuild the wall.

[19 : 39] And the thing of it is, is they're the people that have been living there the entire time. The difference is, is God rose up Nehemiah to help define the work to the people.

Now it wasn't, hey, you need to clean this up so things look better. Hey, you need to clean this up so that you can keep the enemy out. Now it was, this work is for the glory of the name of the Lord God Almighty.

And he began to define the work for them. He began to declare to them it was so much better than just getting their act together. Rather, it was projecting and proclaiming the worthiness of the Lord God in their life.

This work that they have now put their hands to do, and we have it listed, is a defined work. It is a clearly defined work that now has new direction.

And the direction is not to improve the quality of their life, though it does. It is not to improve the security of the city, though it does. Yes, the direction of their work now is to reflect the glory of the Lord God Almighty.

[20 : 53] The work becomes more about God's glory than it does man's comfort. Because the direction that we are focused will always determine the work we will accomplish.

And what we notice here is it's a redeemed work. It's the same work that's had to, that's needed to be done the entire time.

It's the same work. What was the decree of King Cyrus? Whosoever wants to can return back and rebuild. Rebuild the temple. Rebuild the walls. They rebuilt the temple, and they stopped.

Because it was all about, let's just do what we have to to get things going, and then let's go do what we want to do. Because it was, let's worship. We've got the temple up. Okay, let's go back. But now, God gave them a direction for their work.

Now, the thing they were laying their hands to, this seems so mundane. If we just say, hey, we're going to go build a wall. That's a rather mundane task, right? If I tell you, hey, let's go build a

temple, that's awesome. We're going to go build a temple.

[22 : 01] For in the temple, we get to put an altar, and on the altar, we get to worship. And in the temple, we can celebrate. But if I say, let's go build a wall, that seems so mundane. It seems so, well, that's not necessary.

What does the wall have to do? It's not a very spiritual exercise, correct? Paul would say, whatever you do, do us unto the Lord. We understand that, right? Paul says that when I compete, I try not to be the one who boxes against the air.

I have the direction. I have a focus. I have something I'm doing. So when we read the life of Paul in the New Testament, we know that every step that Paul makes is a step of direction and focus and intentionality, and it has a purpose.

One of the things we notice about this chapter is that this is a work of direction. They have a reason for doing it. We never truly put our hands to a good work unless we know why we are doing it.

And the direction we are focused on or facing really determines how well we will do it. It becomes more about the glory of God than it does about the comfort of man.

[23 : 11] So notice here, this is a work of direction. Whatever you're doing, if you're doing it to improve your quality of life or if you're doing it to make things more comfortable, if you're doing it even because it's enjoyable, those things are all well and good, and work is beneficial, and it's great for us.

But we also ought to make sure that the ultimate direction of our labor and the ultimate direction of our work is to use our giftedness, our abilities, and even our opportunities to bring glory to the Lord God Almighty.

That's the true direction of our work. This is what Paul is saying. He says, whatever you do, you need to ensure that you're doing it for the right purpose.

Secondly, we notice that it's not only a work of direction, it is a work of diversity. It is a work of diversity. One of the most beautiful things about this passage is the diverse group of individuals that are scattered around this wall working.

The very first one we meet is Elisha, the high priest. The high priest. And I do agree with some commentators that said that since this is a holy work, the high priest should be leading in this work.

[24 : 25] He should be the first one mentioned. He is working right there next to the sheep gate. He is actually working on the sheep gate, which is where they bring the sheep in to be slaughtered that are put upon the altar. But he is the high priest, right?

He is used to and a little bit more accustomed to wearing the linen garments and standing in the temple and offering sacrifices, not necessarily doing very much manual labor. He even doesn't do most of the manual labor of the skinning of the lambs because that's the Levite's job.

The high priest is really one who does the ceremonial parts. The Levites do all the physical work.

They move everything around. But yet he is the first one here. I believe it was Wiersbe who said he put his holy hands to the work just as much as anyone else.

And here he is. He is the leader in it. And he is the one who started it. So we have the high priest.

We have the priest. We have the goldsmiths and the perfumers sitting side by side with one another. We have a man and his daughters.

So we have men and women. We have leaders of certain regions, but their subjects are not supportive, so they're not there. We have people that live inside of Jerusalem, and we have people that live outside of Jerusalem.

[25 : 27] We have people that are of position, and we have people that are of humble means, and we have people that are unnamed. What is telling is we have a very diverse group of individuals all doing the same thing.

They're rebuilding a wall. And we notice not only the diversity of the class and types of people, men, women, people that are, you know, used to physical labor.

There are craftsmen by trade, people that are not used to physical labor. There are princes and leaders of certain regions and even high priests. We also have people doing different jobs.

Like me personally, I wouldn't want to be the guy working on the refuse gate. That's just me. But someone did it. Some people accomplished more.

There is one I love, the name, that he zealously worked on his portion of the wall. Some probably did a little bit better job. Some, if we look at the sections and we begin to measure out the sections, some constructed so much more wall than others.

[26 : 35] They accomplished more in the same amount of time than the people right beside them. But it is really not about how much one person did because when we speak of the rebuilding of the walls, no one individual or one group of individuals gets all the credit.

They each did their part. And they are diverse in what they can do. They are diverse in where they do it. And they are diverse in who they are when they're doing it.

The wonderful thing about putting your hand to the good work of the Lord God Almighty is that he calls us to labor beside people that aren't always like us. And he calls us all to do our part, though it may be different.

We don't have to look and say, oh, well, why am I working on this gate instead of that gate? Why do I have to be this one where they just carry trash out instead of that one? Or why do I have to be the horse gate when God says we're not supposed to have horses anyway?

You know, why do I have to be in all of these places? Why do I have, why can't I have the angle?

That's a cool place over there. Why do I have to have just this portion of wall? Really, we ought to be content where God has called us to labor, understanding that in the grand, what we would call the work of the kingdom, there are no levels, but there are laborers.

[27 : 57] And these laborers are doing a diverse work and they are diverse individuals. There are a number of believers that are so much different than us. There are pastors that pastor and preach differently than I do.

And there are people that do practices a little bit differently than we do. And that's okay. Because in the work of the kingdom, we don't all look alike.

We don't all have the same responsibilities, but we all have the same calling. Do the work you've been assigned to do. In your way and in your manner and your style.

Sure, I've been impacted and affected by the pastors that I sat under and people that I studied around. But even then, the people that I can say, oh, well, some people have told me before, when I hear you preach, I hear this person.

Or I hear this person. Or I hear that person. And that's fine. But also, I'm starkly different than any other. Because this is how God made me. And this is how he has shaped me over the years.

[28 : 57] And this is the work he's called me to do. And I always say, we have to be careful in this. I tell younger pastors this. I also tell other believers this. Don't try to be anybody else than who you are and do the work he has given you to do in your way.

If you're a perfumer, then be the best perfumer you can be. But if it's time to lay stone next to a goldsmith, that's okay. And we have this wonderful picture of the diversity of the kingdom.

Because the kingdom is full of wonderful diversity. And it is amazing because this is a diverse work. Third, it kind of really piggybacks on the last one.

Because this diversity brings something that much of us don't like. At least I don't because I am very independent by nature. It is a work of dependability. That is, I depend on the person beside me.

The repeated refrain throughout this chapter is, And he worked beside. And he was beside. And he was beside. And after him came.

[30 : 11] That is, this individual, or this group of individuals, this man and his daughters, or this goldsmith, or this priest, or this leader, was doing a work.

And then after him, or beside him, came someone else. And it reveals to us that there is a dependability in the work. And that is, we must depend upon the people beside us to do their work too.

And our work, if you look at a wall, is connected to the work of someone else. There are no independent sections of the wall. If there's an independent section of the wall that's not connected, then that portion can be easily knocked down.

But the wall to be all tied together was dependent upon the person beside them to either side. The gates that were being reconstructed meant very little if there were no walls to hang those gates upon.

And the towers meant nothing if the walls at the bottom of the towers were not constructed by the people that were doing the construction on the walls. So they depended upon one another. And they were relying upon that person, though that person may be starkly different than them, and not do the way they did it, and may not even look the same as them as they did it.

[31 : 29] And maybe their fashion was a little bit stranger. But they were dependent upon them to do their job so that they could do theirs, so that they could pass it on to the next person. And they all labored seamlessly, which is a wonderful thing, because when we see in the body of Christ, it is what Paul refers to as the body of Christ, that each member is dependent upon the other.

That everyone has to do their part. Every joint and every ligament. The often repeated refrain of Paul is that the church is the body of Christ, and that we're not all the eye, we're not all the ear, we're not all the mouth, we're not all the hands and the feet.

Some of us are what he would call the places that are not shown that often. But we all depend upon one another. And in this construction of the wall, we see it.

They were dependent. And friend, listen to me. It is much more harder to criticize the work of the person beside us when we're focused on the work before us. It would be easy to sit there and go, well, that's not the way I would do it.

But if we would focus on our work, realizing someone on the other side of us is depending upon what we're doing, we will criticize far less what they're doing on the other side. In the church world, it's easy to say, well, those in the past did this right or did this wrong and criticized the people around us, but then we also have to have the understanding that the labor we're doing today is the very labor that someone in the future generation, if the Lord carries, will stand upon and build after us.

[33 : 03] Someone will connect to our work unless the Lord calls this church home. I walk down this hall, and you walk down this hall, this church has been here since, well, it's in this location since 1888.

The church has been in origin. That's kind of controversial. Some say 1868, but then there was some silent years, much like Paul being in the wilderness. So 1868, it was meeting in a shared building on Horse Mountain Road, and then it kind of went into hiding for a little while because the Methodist church gave that building away.

They didn't have anywhere to go, so they came down here to Wartrace, and they were on the other side of town. Nobody knows where the other side of town was, by the way, because then they moved to this side of town. Was it on the other side of the tracks? I don't know.

We're audio recording but not video recording, right? I would like to think we had the old Church of Christ building, and they took it from us, but that's just my thought. But anyway, we gave them that side of the tracks.

My family's all over there, okay? I grew up over there. But anyway, we started that. But I don't know where that was at, but it was on the other side of town. They moved to this side of town, and then this building was constructed, but the church has kind of been floating around out there since like 1868, okay?

[34 : 15] And then when I walk down the hall, I see there's not a picture of all the pastors. There's a listing of all the pastors. And you're like, man, that's a long time.

Every one of those pastors pictured out there, including myself, have imperfections and things.

They did wrong, and we do wrong. But I look at it, but I'm building on what they built, right?

I don't always agree, but I'm building on what they built. And someday, if the Lord carries, there'll be a picture after mine. And so if I can focus on the work God gives me to do right now, it's a lot harder for me to criticize the work they didn't do back then.

But wherever we're at in life, not just in church work, but whatever work God's called us to do, we depend upon those on either side of us, but someone's going to depend upon us too.

It is a work of dependence. Somebody is depending upon us to do our work. The job that you have, for God has prepared before you were formed in your mother's womb, God prepared good works for you to do.

[35 : 27] He prepared a sectional wall for you to build. Good works that we may walk therein, it tells us. Whatever that work is, someone else is dependent upon you doing that work.

Because they're going to tie their work to yours. Until the Lord calls his church home, and we stand in his presence, and we cast all of our works at his feet.

It is a work of dependability. And they were dependent upon one another. And it's a beautiful picture. Because most of these people would not hang out with the people on either side of them, except for rebuilding a wall.

They just wouldn't. But here they found a common purpose, and it was to labor for the glory of the Lord God Almighty. Finally, we notice it's a work of determination.

It's a work of determination. As soon as the work begins, the enemy gets active. You know that. We see it at the end of chapter 2.

[36 : 32] We notice that when they began to work, there was an addition to the entourage of the enemies. We were first introduced to Sambalat and Tobiah.

And then by the time we see them begin to work, we have Sambalat, Tobiah, and Geshem. And the enemy gets very active when the people actually begin doing something. One thing we notice as we make our way through Nehemiah is they are not hindered in their work by problems externally or internally.

They're not perfect people, but they continue to put their hand to the work. They are determined to accomplish what God has called them to do through Nehemiah. And they don't stop.

Nehemiah encourages them. Nehemiah is the man that God uses and appoints and says, yes, the enemy is real, but don't be afraid. Nehemiah is the one who says, okay, so the enemy's out there. Let's put a sword on our side.

If you go to bathe, take someone with you standing there with a sword, right? He gives them due diligence. It's not like they say, oh, we don't have any problems. They know the problems there. They have a sword in one hand and a trowel in another.

[37 : 33] Nehemiah is the one who appoints the trumpeters to station themselves around the wall so that if the enemy comes, they can blow the sound of the trumpet and everyone can gather to that one place and they can fight.

But they're determined to do whatever they have to do to finish the work that God has given them to do. It's a work of determination. And they said, we will not be hindered in this.

Nehemiah is the spokesman and says, we've got a great work to do and you have no part in this. We're doing it. And they put their hand to it. They said, let's get to work. And they put their hand to the good work.

And when they put their hand to the good work, much like Christ said, when we put our hand to the plow, we don't look back. And they were determined. Now, some of that determination is because these people aren't living in Jerusalem.

They're determined to make the city reflective of the glory of God. And since they don't inhabit Jerusalem, they want to redefine how people perceive it. And their others have a greater determination, I think.

[38 : 28] And it's found in this passage where it says, they're doing the work on the section of wall opposite their house. That's important. Because they are determined to do a good job. Just my personal thoughts, I imagine those doing the work on the wall opposite of their house is probably the most well-constructed portions of the wall.

Because if I'm rebuilding the wall next to my house, I'm going to do it right. Because the security of their family depended upon how well they did their job. The security of their home and the security. Nehemiah encourages other people to move into Jerusalem. They re-inhabit the city. So some of these people are probably already being asked, hey, when we're done, are you moving back in? So now they are determined that the work they do will be secure.

And it will be done right. Because every day they're going to be looking out the door of their house and they'll see the portion of wall they worked on, right? It is a motivating factor. We try to tell husbands and fathers this matter.

That make sure the greatest portion of wall you work on is that which is opposite your house. Work on the home front first. If you do a good job everywhere else, but you don't do a good job at home, then the wall is weak there.

[39 : 45] But they are determined to do it well and they lay their hands to it because they know the reality of the enemy. They're aware. They're prepared. They know that he's there.

But they are also determined to accomplish what God has called them to do in spite of and sometimes in light of the enemy for they know this is for the glory of God and the benefit of themselves.

So when God calls us to do a work and we put our hands to do the work, let us be determined to do it not because it feels good or because it's pleasant or because it's, quote unquote, the right thing to do.

Let us be determined to do it because it's the only thing God has given us to do. And may we do it as if it was protecting our own home. And may we do it as if our security depended upon it because God calls us to put our hands to the good work occasionally and he calls us to do it through different individuals.

Nehemiah is a man that God uses to move the people but it is the people that put their hands to the work and they did it for the glory of the Lord God Almighty and they were so determined to do so that they accomplished it even in spite of the trials that came their way.

[41 : 03] May we be those who put our hand to the good work and may that good work bring glory and praise and honor to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let's pray. Father, thank you so much for this day. Thank you for the ability that we have had together, together Lord, to be challenged and encouraged by your word.

Lord, I know you have each and every one of us in varying places and various stages and God, you've called us each individually to you for your glory and honor. So Lord, whatever it is you have for us to do, may we do it for your namesake.

May we labor as you've called us to, being content with a portion of all you've given us to work on. And Lord, may we do it with diligence and determination that you may be honored.

We ask it all in Christ's name. Amen. Amen. Thank you, guys.