



Rebuild Sacred Walls that Protect (Nehemiah)

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By Rev. David Koch

Introduction:

As we continue on our spiritual adventure this morning, we are going to look at a principle that God established at the beginning of time. If we are going to thrive spiritually and do more than just survive, we have to do something that will cause us to rejuvenate and cause our spiritual batteries to be recharged.

Our instructor today, like the people we've already heard from, was an alien from another place. Most likely, he had never even been in his homeland or the holy city of Jerusalem. He was an official of the Persian king Artaxerxes. He lived in a comfortable palace. He had all the perks of someone who was a trusted member of the palace administration. But he knew he was an alien.

When some of his compatriots came to him and told him the condition of the walls of Jerusalem, Nehemiah sat down, wept, mourned, fasted, and prayed to God. In Nehemiah's day, approximately 400 years before the time of Christ, a city without walls was an unsafe place. City walls were the means of security and defense.

Nehemiah could have stayed in his comfortable position, but he saw the condition of those city walls as a soul alert opportunity. He went to the king, after much prayer and planning, and asked for permission to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the walls. The walls would serve not only for security, but would enable them to redevelop their national and individual spiritual identity without outside disruption.

Not only did he ask for permission, he asked for supplies. The king agreed. Nehemiah traveled to Jerusalem. Listen to his words:

"I went to Jerusalem, and after staying there three days I set out during the night with a few men. I had not told anyone what my God had put in my heart to do for Jerusalem. There were no mounts with me except the one I was riding on" (Neh. 2:11-12).

I. Seek God and act on what He puts in your heart.

Did you notice what Nehemiah said? God put something in his heart. Brothers and sisters, as we travel through this world to the better world where our citizenship is, we must allow God to put his plans, his purposes, his principles in our hearts.

God knows the beginning from the end. He knows last week, this week and next week. He wants you to thrive. When we seek His face, and He puts something in our heart, then we should act on that.

Nehemiah was eager to rebuild the sacred walls that would protect God's people and allow them to live in peace and safety. The enemy of our soul does not need to have free access to our lives. We can rebuild the things that will strengthen and protect our lives, and in doing so build a barrier that will keep the enemy out of our lives.

What plan had God put in Nehemiah's heart? Nehemiah was used by God to rebuild those city walls. And he accomplished this in 53 days! That's 53 days

without bulldozers, computers, dump trucks, power tools, and other heavy-duty equipment!

But if you continue to read Nehemiah's story, you will learn that Nehemiah had more than construction plans put in his heart. He also was used of God to rebuild the spiritual condition of the people of Jerusalem.

In chapter 8 the people assembled and heard the Word of God from morning until noon. They praised God. Nehemiah declared a feast of celebration. "The joy of the Lord was their strength."

In chapter 9 the people confessed their sins. They fasted. They reviewed God's work in their history. They renewed their commitment to God.

You see, God also put in Nehemiah's heart the desire to see revival come to his people. He was used by God to help rebuild the spiritual strength of the people. We can rebuild the sacred walls that protect.

Nehemiah remained the governor of Judah for about twelve years. He returned to Persia and the service of the king. Some time later, he returned and found things had changed. We will learn that Nehemiah must again challenge God's people to live for him. Let's hear more (read Neh. 13:15–22). We can rebuild the sacred walls that protect.

The enemy's damage was more than broken walls of a city. The fourth commandment that God had given his people was to "remember the Sabbath and keep it holy." From sundown Friday to sundown Saturday, the people of God were to cease from their labors and rest in God's presence.

II. Remember to obey the Lord

The people of Jerusalem seemed to have forgotten the commitments they made the last time Nehemiah was there. They had forsaken their obedience and devotion to the commands of the Lord.

People were doing things on the day of rest that were not allowing them to rest in God's presence. They were doing things they could have done on the other six days of the week. They were loading grain on donkeys. The fish markets were open. Nehemiah commanded that the gates be closed and the desecration of the Sabbath cease. Nehemiah prayed, asking God to remember him with compassion. Yes, brothers and sisters, we can rebuild the sacred walls that protect.

In our busy lives we forget the importance of this principle and so instead of thriving, we simply survive. When we neglect this principle, it interferes first of all with our relationship to the Lord, and then to others. It impacts our health as well. In my personal devotional life, I am in Exodus. This week I was reading in chapter 31 and there God gives His people the reason for the Sabbath. This was to be a sign to them so they would know that God was the Lord who made them holy. It was to be a lasting covenant between God and His people. God was so serious about this principle of rest so His people could thrive, He instructed Moses that those who did not observe it were to be put to death.

One of the ways the enemy has damaged us today is by desecration of the Sabbath. We Christians are to celebrate the Lord's Day. The Sabbath principle runs through the scriptures. The people were to rest one day in seven. The land was to rest every seven years. Jesus words as recorded in **Mark 2:27** "**The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.**" Even the various seasons that we have speak of life and growth and a season of rest, to refresh and renew. We were not created to work without rest.

One man challenged another to an all-day wood chopping contest. The challenger worked very hard, stopping only for a brief lunch break. The other man had a leisurely lunch and took several breaks during the day. At the end of the day, the challenger was surprised and annoyed to find that the other fellow had chopped substantially more wood than he had. "I don't get it," he said. "Every time I checked, you were taking a rest, yet you chopped more wood than I did." "But you didn't notice," said the winning woodsman, "that I was sharpening my ax when I sat down to rest." *L. S. Chafer, Grace.*

The Ten Commandments remind us that we need regular times of rest to recalibrate our souls to God's heart.

Our culture has damaged this principle. It is easy for us to devote more time on the Lord's Day to soccer, watching football, doing yard work, reading newspapers, doing laundry, cleaning, working, and the list can go on and on.

III. Recharge your spiritual and emotional batteries

What can we do? I'd recommend that we "resolve to re-soul." You'll find what that's all about in your

journal, but here's the idea — this week, ask yourself several questions:

1. What kinds of activity (or non-activity) tend to recharge your spiritual and emotional batteries? Maybe it's walking or fellowshiping with Christian friends, or reading the Bible or other inspirational literature. Part of it might be taking a nap to refresh your body so that the soul can be reinvigorated as well. Doing things for others or having an extended time of reflection might be best for you. You decide.
2. What day or part of your weekend will you build a wall around to re-soul? Once you've decided what you will do, plan on a time to do it; otherwise, it won't get done.

Do this for each remaining week of the Adventure. Here's a simple way of keeping track: Get a small brick. Each Monday, use a permanent marker and record on the brick how you re-soul on the weekend. Keep the brick in a prominent place as a reminder to plan your next weekend's "re-souling." I am praying that we will let God help us rebuild the sacred walls that protect.

Do you believe that the Sabbath principle is valid today? I do. Do you believe it would benefit your soul to view the Lord's Day as a soul alert opportunity to make some choices as aliens from a better world? I do, too!

Conclusion:

Nehemiah reminds us that in order to thrive, we have to do what it takes to rejuvenate and rebuild. Seek God and do what He puts in your heart. Do not forget to be obedient to the Lord. Recharge your emotional and spiritual batteries. Do not let the enemy interfere with completing the task of putting in place those things that will help you be restored physically, spiritually and emotionally. Remember that rebuilding will take time and persistence.

IV. Rebuilding requires time and persistence

You will never get done what you don't keep pursuing.

When we look at this story, we realize that even though the wall was built quickly it still took time and persistence to rebuild the broken down walls. There was effort and energy put into rebuilding.

There was opposition to their rebuilding the wall. Any time you attempt to reclaim something for God that has been lost, or is broken down, there will be opposition to that effort. In chapter 4 of the book of Nehemiah, we see they endured ridicule. In chapter 6 there was further opposition to rebuilding, by the enemies' tactic of distracting the people. There was an invitation for them to stop work and meet with the enemy. Nehemiah realized that their scheme was meant to harm him as the leader.

Then the enemy sent a message to them that was totally untrue. The enemies of Israel were doing everything in their power to frighten God's people and get them to stop in their effort of replacing that wall of protection.

But God's people kept at the task that was before them. Finally the job was complete. The wall was finished.