

# Bible Study - May 20, 2020

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Date: 20 May 2020

Preacher: Pastor Tom Kraft

[ 0 : 00 ] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[ 2 : 30 ] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[ 5 : 00 ] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[ 7 : 29 ] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

And so, thank you.

[ 11 : 29 ] We're not going to be here.

It's not easy to know what we can do.

We're going to create a place.

And the people that are doing the people who are doing the right thing.

feel vulnerable and defenseless. In verse 4, it says, when I heard these things, I sat down and wept. And for some days, I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven.

[ 13 : 48 ] Nehemiah's reaction is that this isn't good. Sometimes, unless we're facing the struggles, unless we're feeling the sense of the brokenness, it's hard for us to really truly grasp what can be going on.

We have people like Pastor Kathy who are working in a coronavirus ward. I've been to the hospital. Some people are doctors and nurses. I know of one family where their daughter goes off every week, every day rather, to work within the coronavirus ward and to watch people who are dying.

It's very difficult. I've known people who've gotten sick from this virus. When these things strike us, it's different. What has happened downstate where we don't know as many people, that's downstate. But when it becomes right in our world and it's our friends, our relatives, that's what happened to Nehemiah. So long as he was living in Susa, living in the citadel, he could just go on with life as if everything was fine. Sometimes we like that protective bubble of ignorance, don't we? If we can simply go on without having to face the reality. But it doesn't make the reality go away. It just makes us ignorant of it. Instead, what we need to do is we need to turn our struggles and our problems over to God. Now, what did Nehemiah do? Well, he wept because he felt very sad.

And then he mourned. He mourned for the city of Jerusalem. You know, you can mourn the life we used to have. I do. We can feel bad because we can't just go do whatever we want, go to whatever restaurant we feel like, gather together in worship. Just do the things we feel normal about doing.

I talked to a woman today who has been more or less socially isolated for most of this time. Happened to drive by to, I think, drop off some masks. Appreciate those masks.

[ 16 : 11 ] Anyways, we stood like eight feet apart. Well, she was in her car and I talked to her about eight feet apart. That's as close as we could get. It just felt so strange.

People we have loved and we've known for years. We have to be careful. So he mourned. It's all right to feel bad that life isn't the way it used to be.

And then he fasted and he prayed. Fasting is when we give something up. Usually it's food, but it could be other things. It's when we say to God, I am so serious about this that I am going to go without sustenance. I'm going to put away food. I love food. I'm going to put away food to prove how much the thing I'm bringing before you really, truly concerns me.

And then he prayed. People sometimes think that it's hard to pray. Praying is just talking to God. That's all it is. It's no different than when I talk to you. Instead, we talk to God. So he prayed and he fasted and he mourned for some days.

So often we want to do quick prayers to God. Dear God, bless me because I'm having a bad day. Amen. God, I need you to fix something. You know, God bless his food. Amen.

[ 17 : 43 ] There's nothing wrong with the fact that sometimes our prayers are short because we've said what needs to be said. But there's something about when we're facing a true struggle, a true problem that we take time. I was talking about it in worship this last Sunday.

I wonder how many people have prayed to God about the coronavirus going away. We prayed about it Sunday. We need to continue to pray about it.

Dear God in heaven, remove this pandemic from us. Take away the struggles. Take away the sickness. Put it as far away from us as the bottom of the ocean.

And be with us and bless us. And help us to be able to do the work of God again. In Jesus' name. Amen. It's important to pray like that.

But imagine if you were to turn your life to God for several days. Several days. Day in, day out.

[ 18 : 58 ] Nothing but God. Because prayer does affect the heart of God. But prayer even more so changes us.

So to take the time and prayer will transform who and what we are and how we feel. And then it says that he spoke to God. Oh Lord God of heaven.

The great and awesome God. Who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him. And obey his commands. Excuse me.

It's not the corona. Just talking constantly. Lord God of heaven. Great and awesome God. That's like the beginning of the Lord's prayer, isn't it?

Our Father who art in heaven. Hallowed. Or praised be your name. How awesome is God. Who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him.

[ 20 : 01 ] And obey his commands. A covenant is an agreement. That's what the word means. And this covenant he's describing is a covenant of love.

To love each other. To make an agreement. To love each other. Reminds us of wedding vows, doesn't it? To have and to hold from this day forward.

For better, for worse. For richer, for poorer. In sickness and health. To love and to cherish. Till death do we part. We make an agreement. Of love.

And God makes an agreement. To love us. And of course it says. Those who obey his commands.

I'm working on my sermon for this week. And one of the things that Jesus talks about. Is his command. Which is simply to love one another. To love each other.

[ 21 : 00 ] As Jesus loved us. The platinum rule. Not even love each other. As we love ourselves. But love each other. The way God would love us.

That sacrificial. That opportunity for love. That is beyond. Even what. We normally see. In a human relationship.

And it's about. Obeying that commandment. Of love. Let your ear be attentive. And your eyes open to hear.

The prayer your servant is praying. Before you day and night. For your servants. The people of Israel. I confess the sins. We Israelites.

Including myself. My father's house. Have committed against you. Verse 7. We have acted very wickedly toward you. We have not obeyed the commands.

[ 21 : 57 ] Decrees and laws. You gave your servants. Moses. Forgive us our trespasses. As we forgive those who trespass against us. Confession.

Recognizing. That we are broken. That we don't get it right. And that we need God to forgive us. To be a part of every prayer.

Because actually. As we confess our sins. It says that God will forgive our sins. And then once our sins are forgiven. We're covered by that covenant of grace.

We're made perfect in God's grace. Which means we are acceptable. To stand in the presence of the perfect living God.

Do you follow? So we really need to confess first. So that we are okay to be standing. Before God. Dear God in heaven.

[ 22 : 53 ] I have sinned. I have broken your commands. I have sought my own concerns. I have not worried about other people.

I have sinned. Forgive me Lord. Teach me to be what I need to be. And help me to find the strength to do it. In Jesus name we pray.

Amen. And it says if we confess with our mouth. And believe with our heart. That Jesus is Lord. He will forgive us. We will be saved. In the name of Jesus Christ. Your sins are forgiven.

Glory to God. Amen. So he says that God is attentive to him. In verse 6. He says Lord listen to me.

And put your eye upon me. Because I've been praying day and night. So he's asking God to pay particular attention to what he's doing.

[ 23 : 57 ] I often wonder how many prayers God can hear at a time. It's a lot of prayers. But Nehemiah is so concerned about this that he's praying not just a short prayer.

He's praying for some days. Day and night. Night and day. And he's not praying for himself.

He's praying for God's people. The people of Israel. So. He also reminds God about Moses.

Moses is the one who received the covenant promise in the first place. In verse 8 he says. Remember the instructions you gave your servant Moses.

Saying if you are unfaithful I will scatter you among the nations. But if you return. To me and obey my commands.

[ 24 : 59 ] Then even if your exiled people are at the farthest horizon. I will gather them from there and bring them to the place I have chosen as a dwelling for my name.

So. Sometimes we break the promise with God. The covenant with God is a covenant of love. And just like in a marriage.

If you break your faithfulness. You break the covenant. So when we sin and we do what's wrong. We break our covenant of love with God.

The good news is that God. He didn't break his covenant with us. So what that means is if we return to God.

If we turn our hearts. Our lives. Our world around. And turn back to God. Then he brings us out of exile. He brings us out of exile.

[ 26 : 00 ] In this case. They come physically to a place. That he's. He's. Sometimes we call this building I'm in.

The house of God. A church building. Is not the church. That's why we're still doing church. Even though we're doing it.

In this way. Now there's things that it makes it difficult for. It's hard to do some of the sacraments. It's hard for us to really be in fellowship with one another.

We can sing but it's just not the same. But the church. Is still gathering. You and I are still getting together to be church.

However the building's important. There's a reason why we build buildings like this. Now this. We call our fellowship hall. It's a place for us to gather.

[ 27 : 02 ] To be together. And to get closer. And create better bonds with each other. And we have a lot of fellowship activities. So we can love God with our whole heart. And we're right now in a Bible study.

Where we learn about God. And grow in our faith. So that we can love God with all our mind. And I know a lot of people are still doing things. We talked about making the mask.

Or some people are feeding the hungry. Or just reaching out to do what needs to be done. To make the work of God happen. You can share this video with your friends.

Online for instance. That's loving God with all our strength. But there's something about coming to a building. And gathering with a group of people. And worshiping God.

That's different than this. We walk in the room we refer to as a sanctuary. Where we have taken time away from the rest of the world. And our heart and our mind focuses on God.

[ 28 : 03 ] It's not that God's here more. It's not that we're here more with God. When we're here. So anyways. He's saying that God has made a promise.

To be with his people. When they come back from exile. Verse 10 he says. They are your servants and your people. Whom you redeemed by your great strength.

And your mighty hand. God redeems us. Redemption is a very powerful word in the Christian faith. What it's saying is. We were purchased.

When we were. When we were. Lacked in the power of sin. We were sold if you will. As slaves to sin. Because we don't have the power.

To overcome the temptation of an archangel. To overcome the power of the temptation. And the struggles of sin. We find ourselves enslaved to sin.

[ 29 : 03 ] So God purchases us. Us out of that slavery. He pays for us. To be redeemed. Redemption. When we think redemption.

Often in our culture. We think of like. Somebody went to a pawn shop. To get a ring back. Or something like that. That we redeem. Our car from the. From the impoundment pound. Or whatever.

That that's a form of redemption. But in this case. We're being redeemed. From our brokenness. It says that God.

Redeems us. The whole idea about Jesus is. He paid the price. For our sin. Now. What did he do?

Well he died to his perfection. He died to his righteousness. An agonizing experience for Jesus. To go through all that sin. And pain. And brokenness.

[ 30 : 01 ] That we have created. Just so that he could find a way. To connect us back up with God. That restoration. Or that reconciliation.

That at want with. Or atonement. That makes us one with God again. And here's. Here's who he paid the price to.

And this is how it gets a little tricky. Because some people think. Well Jesus paid the price to the devil. But that would make the devil. At least as powerful as Jesus. Maybe more powerful. Because he'd have to pay him off.

Now the only one. That God paid the price to. Was to himself. And that sounds. Kind of strange.

There's a sermon many years ago. Jonathan Edwards I believe. Sinners in the hands of an angry God. Thousands of people came to God. Because of that message.

[ 30 : 57 ] An angry God. We don't like the idea of an angry God. But sometimes we do get angry. Sometimes we feel like. We have truly been offended.

Disrespected. And the only way. We can truly overcome that. Is if somebody pays a price. Sometimes we feel better.

When the person who offended us. Pays a price. But if we love them. We don't want. To make them suffer. So sometimes. We do something called forgiving them.

Which means what we're doing is. Is we're not holding that pain. That brokenness against them. We take it to ourselves. We take the penalty.

We take the hurt. Of not. Being able to resolve it completely. And the only way we can resolve it. Is by taking. The hurt. Of that brokenness.

[ 31 : 55 ] And internalizing it ourselves. That's what Jesus did for us. That's what it means when it says that God redeemed his people. Verse 10. They are your servants and your people.

Whom you redeemed by your great strength and your mighty hand. Now in this case. He's also referring to a historical reality. That the people of Israel.

Were actually slaves in Egypt. And God went and brought them out. Or redeemed them. But there are also right now. Many of them living in a foreign culture.

With the Persians. And so God is working to redeem them as a nation. And bring them back. Verse 11.

O Lord. Let your ear. O Lord. Let your ear. Let your ear be attentive. To the prayer.

[ 32 : 51 ] Of your servant. And to the prayer of your servants. Who delight in revering your name. This room is very dry.

In verse 11. It says. O Lord. Let your ear be attentive. To the prayer. Of this your servant. And to the prayer of your servants. Who delight in revering your name.

We really should delight. In honoring God. In giving God reverence. That's a very religious term. We don't use much anymore. In giving God reverence.

Sometimes they call me a reverend. It's an interesting thought. Isn't it? That there's a person that's particularly holy. I don't think of myself. As being particularly holy. But I do understand the title.

And it's appropriate. Give your servant success today. By granting him favor. In the presence of this man. Now who's the man?

[ 33 : 53 ] We're going to get it in the next line. I was cup bearer to the king. So we've learned who Nehemiah is now.

Nehemiah is in the citadel. In the heart of the capital city. Because his job is to be the cup bearer of the king. Which sounds like he's a butler.

You know, Alfred on Batman. Well, in a way he is. But Nehemiah is very important. We need to understand what a cup bearer does. A cup bearer does two things.

First of all. A cup bearer drinks whatever the king drinks first. First. Sometimes he eats whatever the king eats first. So they often would say, long live the king.

Because what they were also saying by that is, long live me. Because I'm eating what you eat. I'm drinking what you drink. But they also were a regular presence with the king.

[ 34 : 59 ] Sometimes they'd sit down and eat a meal with them. They were a confidant of the king. They were with the king when most people weren't even around.

So Nehemiah is close to the king. And he's been praying now for some days, it says. Let's say about a week. Praying and fasting and preparing and praying to God to get the right words when he goes to talk to the king.

This is what he said in chapter 2. In the month of Nisan, in the 20th year of King Adorexes, when wine was brought for him, I took the wine and gave it to the king.

I had not been sad in his presence before. Typically kings didn't have people around them that were sad or depressed or were telling bad things.

Because, first of all, a lot of leaders, when they hear bad things, they tend to do bad things. I don't know how else to say that the right way.

[ 36 : 10 ] They call it the CEO effect. Don't tell the boss what's going on that's wrong. Because probably the boss will do something you won't want to have done. Now, of course, it also means that the boss doesn't hear all that they need to hear.

So that's not a good thing. So the king needs somebody who they can trust to tell them the honest truth. All right. But the second thing is, especially in ancient days, some degree today, people are in such high positions of privilege and power.

Oftentimes are surrounded by things that are pleasant. They have privilege. They don't live like the rest of us. They usually don't take out their own garbage.

It was President Bush, H. Bush, I believe, who was fascinated by the scanner for groceries in a grocery store.

He'd not seen such a thing because he never bought his own groceries. Interesting thought, isn't it? We just do regular stuff.

[ 37 : 20 ] The other day I turned over a garden. We're making a garden. My wife wants to grow vegetables. Well, who's going to dig that dirt up? It's me.

Right? So I get my hands dirty. I get a couple nicks and scrapes. I do a lot of stuff for myself because that's who I am. If I'm going to be a person who has the means to be comfortable in life, I also have to do a lot of the regular routine work.

I do take out my own garbage. I clean my own bathrooms. Right? That's what we do. But people of privilege don't deal with those things. Their life doesn't have to spend much time with the things that we would consider mundane or more unpleasant tasks.

And so people around the king tend to be happy. It's a good place to go to be in the presence of the king.

And Nehemiah says, I'd never been sad in the presence of the king before. He enjoyed what he was doing. He was happy to do it. So the king asked me, why does your face look so sad when you are not ill?

[ 38 : 46 ] This can be nothing but sadness of heart. Now that's an interesting statement because the king knew Nehemiah well enough to tell that he wasn't happy.

And he asked him about it. And Nehemiah, it says in the end of verse 2, it says, I was very much afraid. Why would he be afraid?

Remember the CEO effect I was talking about? When somebody's not happy around the king, sometimes the next thing they hear is, off with their head.

Get him out of here. I don't need this sad sack around me. Right? We don't want unpleasantries.

We don't want to hear about the problems. I don't want to know about all the illnesses and pains and brokenness. But people need to share those.

[ 39 : 47 ] I know that when we receive a phone call or we talk to a friend or a relative, what we really want to hear is all the wonderful joys and celebrations going on in their lives.

But sometimes they just need to tell the brokenness and the pain and the hurt. And especially during times like this when we're facing this stress and trauma. I find I have people, family and friends, who call just because they need to unload some stuff.

Just need to talk to someone. Just need to tell somebody what's wrong. It helps. Maybe you're the kind of person who needs to share that with somebody, but maybe you're even more importantly the kind of person who can receive that.

It's one of the ministries I think that's wonderful that we're doing. I can't possibly call all the people in our church all the time. There's hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of people.

It takes hours and hours. I've called a number, but it takes hours and hours. And some need to call more than others from their pastor.

[ 40 : 57 ] But you can call them all. You can call one group and somebody else out there calls another group and somebody else calls someone else. And if we can break down our congregation where 100 people are calling, it's only four or five people.

You can do that. In fact, I'm even going to suggest contact Pastor Sherry at SherryMahar at PendletonChurch.org or PCUMC.org and let her know that you'd be willing to do that.

There are people that really need someone to talk to. Anyways, I'm a little bit off topic, but not really. The king is asking him, how are you feeling? And instead of killing him, he listens to him.

And so Nehemiah says in verse 3, I said to the king, may the king live forever. I'm sure he says that all the time. Remember what I said? He eats his food and drinks his drink, right? Why should my face not look sad when the city where my fathers are buried lies in ruin and its gates have been destroyed by fire?

Now the truth is, we don't know if Nehemiah told the king that he was Jewish. In the empire of Persia, there are all sorts of different backgrounds and ethnic groups, and people didn't really pay a lot of attention to that.

[ 42 : 26 ] So he's not saying the city of Jerusalem, which might or might not have created a problem for the king. He just says, the place where my ancestors are buried has been destroyed.

The king just said to me, what is it you want? Can you imagine that? The king, the leader of the most powerful empire in the world, says, what do you want, Nehemiah?

So, it says that Nehemiah prayed to God, to the God of heaven, and he answered the king.

Now this isn't one of those long prayers. This didn't go on forever. Nehemiah is standing in front of the king. I'm sure he didn't spend time for a formal prayer that would last days and days.

I suspect this is more like, okay, God, give me the words to say it right. Now, king, this is what I need. So, here's what he said. I answered the king in verse five. If it pleases the king, and if your servant has found favor in his sight, let him send me to the city in Judah where my fathers are buried so I can rebuild it.

[ 43 : 40 ] Okay, note. If it pleases the king, send me in your name to do this great thing, to rebuild a city.

Okay. That way, he's saying the king will get credit for this. Then the king, with the queen sitting beside him, asked me, how long will your journey take, and when will you get back?

It pleased the king to send me, and so I set a time. So, the king is giving him permission to go, but he wants him back. Isn't that interesting?

He really likes Nehemiah and appreciates his work. Now, I took note that it says the king, the queen sitting beside him. I wonder if the queen influenced this at all.

I wonder if this is a queen named Esther or a queen related to Queen Esther. Maybe someone in the family.

[ 44 : 43 ] I don't know. It's just curious. The queen is there. I also said to him, if it pleases the king, verse 7, may I have letters to the governors of Trans-Euphrates so that they will provide me safe conduct while I arrive in Judah.

Okay, so can you send some letters to the governors to make sure that I don't get in trouble with them along the way. May I have a letter to Ashbeth, keeper of the king's forest, so that he will give me timber to make beams for the gates of the citadel by the temple, and for the city wall and the residence I will occupy.

Okay, so, what was Nehemiah doing while he was praying day and night to the Lord? He was also making a plan.

And sometimes you have to have a plan ready so that when the opportunity comes, you're prepared to do what needs to be done.

He didn't just say, can I go? He says, give me letters for these governors and I'd like some timber, some wood to help build a house and to help build the wall.

[ 46 : 03 ] And he says, and because the gracious hand of my God was upon me, the king granted my request. So he gives credit to God for the king answering this.

So, so he actually is, is asking for much more than just permission to go. In fact, he didn't go by himself.

In verse nine, it says, so I went to the governors of Transsephrates and gave them the king's letter. The king all had also sent army officers and cavalry with me.

So, okay, let's picture what we've got. Nehemiah has got letters directly from the king. He's on a mission now from the king because that's the way he's framed it.

And he's got letters saying that he's going to get all this timber, this huge amount of timber that will have to be carried and transported. So you got an entourage of those people that have to go with them.

[ 46 : 59 ] And he has military officers and a cavalry escort. We don't know how many people went with Nehemiah, but we have a suspicion that it was a pretty large crowd.

This is when we talk about the three kings in the New Testament. And it says, when they showed up in Jerusalem, all of Jerusalem was astir because the three, three, there probably weren't three. We don't know how many there were, just multiples of them.

When those wise men showed up, they probably showed up with an entourage. This guy is showing up with an entourage, but it's much more than an entourage. He's got wagons for the wood. He's got drivers of the wagons.

He's got army officers and he's got a cavalry. We don't know how big, but cavalry is not a couple of soldiers. That's a line of troops coming with him. And so everybody's going, whoa, who's this guy, right?

Because he asked the king and because he had a plan. So I'm asking God to end this coronavirus and I'm praying to God to guide us in what we need to do going forward.

[ 48 : 08 ] But we also have to start working on a plan. How will we come out of the coronavirus? Now, when I say we need to work on a plan, I mean, each of us has to work on a plan. You have to work on your own individual plan.

Like I have to work on mine. How will your family come out of it? How will you celebrate birthdays? What will happen two days, two weeks, two months, two years from now? How do you plan to live into this future that God is giving you?

We have to decide it as a church as well. When will we be back to doing things live? Will it start with small groups or are we going to go with a larger group?

Are we going to be social distancing? Will people be wearing masks? Are we going to take people's temperatures? How often do we need to sanitize the building? How close will people sit with each other?

Will we even worship in the sanctuary? All sorts of questions. But we need to have the answers for these because if we don't have the answers, the time is going to come and somewhere somebody's going to say, it's okay, go back to worship.

[ 49 : 13 ] And we're not ready. We don't know what we're doing. We don't want to be those people. We want to be the people when the opportunity comes, like what happened with Nehemiah, we know exactly what we need and where we're going and what we want.

And we're ready to go. So we're working on that, just so you know. It's a group of people working on trying to figure these things out for our church. And verse 10, when Zimbalat, the Haronite, and Tobiah, the Ammonite official, heard about this, they were very much disturbed that someone had come to promote the welfare of the Israelites.

Okay, so they're not happy about this. These are local officials that are from the Ammonites and they don't really like the Israelites.

Okay. The last few weeks we've been talking about the people who became the Samaritans. That's not these folks. These are folks that live in the region, but they're not have anything to do with the Jewish faith or the Jewish people and they don't like it.

But remember, he's coming with letters for the governors. He's coming with a cavalry. He's coming with officers. He's got an entourage of guys bringing timber. He's somebody that needs to be reckoned with.

[ 50 : 37 ] He is a representative of the emperor. And so they need to pay attention to that. So he's come and he's on the other side of the Euphrates. So once you cross over the Euphrates, you go from the region we call Iraq today to the region they call Palestine.

That's the demarcation line. In verse 11, it said, I went to Jerusalem. And after staying there three days, I set out during the night with a few men.

Okay. So he went to Jerusalem, shows up with his whole entourage, and then he waited three days. What was he doing in those three days? You see, one of the things we're learning from Nehemiah is preparation, taking your time.

He didn't come into the city and immediately make an announcement and say, I have arrived. I am Nehemiah. He took three days just to get a sense of the city.

And then he's going to go out to inspect what things look like. He took a few men. He said, I had not told anyone what my God had put in my heart to do for Jerusalem.

[ 51 : 45 ] There were no mounts with me except the one I was riding on. So he took some men who were walking. He didn't tell anybody what he was doing in Jerusalem. Nobody knew who this guy was or why he had brought all these timber or who these soldiers were about or anything.

Now he's going to take a tour. By night, I went out through the valley gate toward the jackal well and the dung gate, examining the walls of Jerusalem, which had been broken down, and its gates, which had been destroyed by fire.

We're not going to go into what each gate represents. They tend to represent something that happened in that area. So the dung gate, if you don't know what dung means, look it up.

I'm not going to tell you. It was probably the place where they emptied their toilets, shall we say. Okay. Then I moved on toward the fountain gate and the king's pool, but there was not enough room for my mount to get through.

So I went up the valley by night, examining the wall. Understanding, he was the only one who was mounted, so he had to get off his horse. Get down off your high horse.

[ 52 : 55 ] Walk with the rest of the men and look around. Finally, I turned back and reentered through the valley gate. The officials did not know where I had gone or what I was doing, because as yet I had said nothing to the Jews or the priests or nobles or officials or any others who would be doing the work.

So he hasn't told anybody what he's about, but he goes out and he inspects things. He takes some time to figure things out. He's planning. He's planning.

What's he going to say? What's he going to do? How is this going to work out? Nehemiah was a planner. In verse 17 of chapter 2, he says, Then I said to them, meaning the officials of Jerusalem, the leaders of the city of Jerusalem.

It wasn't a lot of people, but they were the people that were there, 40,000, 50,000 people. He said to them, You see the troubles we are in. Jerusalem lies in ruins, and its gates have been burned with fire.

Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, and we will no longer be in disgrace. I also told them about the gracious hand of my God upon me and what the king had said to me.

[ 54 : 07 ] So he gathers these people together, and he says, Essentially, I'm on a mission from God, like the men in black, right? I'm on a mission from God to rebuild these walls, because this is disgraceful.

This is terrible. This must make you feel awful. This must be really hard on you. And so I've come to help you to rebuild these walls.

And that's really amazing. And he gives the credit to God that God is the one who made all of this happen. All right? God is going to help them to rebuild, is what he's saying.

Well, they replied, Let us start rebuilding. So they began this good work. Actually, in the book of Ezra, it says that they had tried to rebuild the walls, but it just became too much work, and they couldn't do it.

So they quit. They quit. It was just too much. Sometimes we face a problem that's just so huge, we don't know what to do about it. It's more than we can do on our own.

[ 55 : 22 ] That's why the government is giving out help to small businesses, because they know that we need a little extra. That's why God is giving an extra support to the people of Israel through Nehemiah.

Nehemiah represents God coming and blessing them. God actually demonstrating that he's with them by sending Nehemiah with all this timber, with all these people.

It doesn't say that the cavalry went away, although we don't really know. It doesn't say that the wagon drivers went away. We have no idea. All we know is that he's there in the city of Jerusalem, and he says to the people, let's rebuild the wall.

Let's make this thing right again, because God wants us to do this. And their response is, let's do this thing.

So they began, and it says, this good work. They began this good work. Have you ever worked on a good work?

[ 56 : 39 ] It's an important thing. When Zimbalat the Ammonite, Tobiah the Ammonite official, and Geshem the Arab heard about it, they mocked and ridiculed us.

What is this you are doing? They asked. Are you rebelling against the king? So, you know, once we start working on something that's important, that needs to be done, that we feel God wants us to do, there will be people who will make fun of us.

There will be people who will tell us it's too hard. There will be people that will try to get in our way. And in this case, they even said to Nehemiah, remember, Nehemiah is the cupbearer of the king.

Are you rebelling against the king? Of course not. They're simply trying to put the wall around Jerusalem so people feel safe and so that they can feel as if they are a city again.

They've been made whole, if you will. And there's a lot of people right now who need to be made whole, who are feeling to some degree like there's too much brokenness.

[ 57 : 45 ] And we could all use Nehemiah to come in and help us in the midst of this and help us to feel as if we can get through it.

Because sometimes we're in the midst of a struggle, when we're in the midst of brokenness, when we're facing all these difficulties, sometimes it can feel we're so alone and the task is so huge that there's no way for us to accomplish it.

And we need a Nehemiah. Lord, send us a Nehemiah. We all need a Nehemiah, don't we? So these people are trying to oppose him and he's doing what he's supposed to do.

In verse 20, he said, I answered them saying, the God of heaven will give us success. We, his servants, will start rebuilding.

But as for you, you have no share in Jerusalem or any claim or historic right to it. You don't want to be a part of it. You're not a part of it.

[ 58 : 49 ] You're with us or you're not. Just get out of our way. We're going to do this because God is with us. God wants us to do this.

God is leading us. What a great measure of faith. Now, I'm going to try to do chapter three relatively quickly because it's very repetitive and it really talks about all the different areas of the wall and the gates that are built.

So we'll see if we can do this. Elisha, the high priest and his fellow priest went to work and rebuilt the sheep gate. They dedicated it and set its doors in place, building as far as the tower of the hundred, which they dedicated, and as far as the tower of Anel.

The men in Jericho built the adjoining section and Zucker, son of Imri, built the next, that built next to them. The fish gate was rebuilt by the sons of Hesemnah.

They laid its beams and put its doors and bolts and bars in place. Merimoth, son of Uriah, the son of Hekaz, repaired the next section. Next to him, Meshushalem, son of Berechiah, the son of Meshbel, made repairs.

[ 60 : 07 ] And next to him, Zadok, son of Benah, also made repairs. The next section was repaired by the men of Tekoa, but their nobles would not put their shoulders to the work under their supervisors.

So lots of different people are working on it. And by the way, most of them are not skilled craftsmen. We don't see anywhere where it says the carpenters or the wall builders or the stonemasons.

These are just folks. Some of them are priests. Some of them are just common people. Some are building a spot in front of their house. They're just regular folk. But the people who were wealthy, they weren't going to do anything.

Maybe we will pause there. I think it's important. We may read through this. We might just talk about it. But let me talk about something else real briefly. We have in this different groups of people.

Some of them are wealthy and powerful and some of them are not. Some of them are more common and some of them are officials. Now, many of the people in this group were more prominent than just regular folk.

[ 61 : 20 ] But either way, there are differentials of the people. So, one of the interesting things as a people of faith is that most churches are made up of homogenous groups of people.

people are not comfortable. That's true racially, but that's also true economically. So, if you have a working class church, a person who is middle class won't feel comfortable. And if you have a middle class church, oftentimes, a person who is working class won't feel comfortable.

We tend to have both in our church, which is a very nice mix, even though sometimes we have to learn each other's language because we have a different language. my father was working class.

My father talked like this and that's how he talked, you know, Tommy. So, he talked that way and so could I if I wanted to and sometimes I do, you know. Or we could talk the way we're supposed to properly speak, right?

It doesn't make us better or worse. It doesn't make us somehow more welcomed by God. It's just different.

[ 62 : 28 ] But the one group of people that always stand out are the very rich and the very powerful because most people think that somehow they're favored in a way that isn't fair.

My mother used to call it reverse snobbery when people treated wealthy people poorly because they were what would you say?

envious of their of the people's position. Now, we have Nehemiah and he can talk to the working people and he can talk to the king.

He can talk to the governors and he can talk to the cavalry and he's not uncomfortable with getting down on his hands and knees to build a wall and neither are the priests and neither are all these people that have been mentioned.

But some people felt that they weren't that that work was beneath them. They didn't feel that they should do it and they certainly didn't want to work under the supervisors that have been set in place.

[ 63 : 34 ] So we want to be careful that all people are welcome to God. It doesn't matter if you're wealthy and God has blessed you financially that way. He did that so that you have financial resources to do amazing things for God.

So you should be using that gift for God. and it doesn't matter if you don't have quite that much and you're just more struggling.

There are things that God has given to you to do for the work of God. And when we put all these together we can find a way that we can see the grace of God and the wonder of God and the blessing of fellow brothers and sisters in Christ that we can work together and we can be together.

So it's one of the fascinating things about I've noticed even in church life that oftentimes churches segregate out. You wealthy people don't belong anywhere.

You very poor people don't belong anywhere. We'll take the working class and we'll take the middle class or we'll take just the working class or just the middle class when God is saying take everybody.

[ 64 : 39 ] Take everybody. Well anyways in the rest of this chapter they really go on and talk about how all these different people made repairs. Different kinds of people.

Some were goldsmiths. Some were priests. Some were just regular folks were fixing a piece in front of their house. They were all different folks.

In verse 17 it says next to him the repairs were made by the Levites under Rahim son of Ben-I. The Levites are people that worked in the temple.

They were kind of like church staff. Next to him the repairs were made by their countrymen under Benaiah son of Heddedad ruler of the other half district of Kila.

So here you got a man who came in to help with this project and some people work under his direction. And it just keeps going on with all the different people that God uses in different ways and you can read through them all.

[ 65 : 44 ] It would be a good exercise to do. But in the end they all took a section and repaired pieces of the wall. And so this chapter ends by saying next to him the goldsmiths made repairs as far as the house of the temple servants and the merchants opposite the inspection gate as far as the room above the corner between the room above the corner and the sheep gate the goldsmiths and merchants made repairs.

So they took that one little section and repaired it. So the entire chapter of chapter 3 is just pointing out to us how each and every family unit each group of people each group of employed people they all went to work on this wall.

And because they all pitched in they're actually going to be successful and pretty quickly. And in a ministry like ours it doesn't work if only a small group of people do what needs to be done.

We need everybody to do their part. And it may even be things that you wouldn't normally do and that's okay. Just like I said I had to turn over a garden.

That's not something I normally do but that's okay. There's things that we do because God has called us and God wants us to do things and in this case he's called a wide variety of people to work on different sections of the wall to repair it.

- [ 67 : 19 ] Different people different places. The repairs next to him were made by the priests from the surrounding region. They didn't even live in Jerusalem.
- Different priests came in to work on the wall. There's nothing wrong with that. Verse 26 And the temple servants living on the hill of Ophel made repairs up to a point opposite the water gate toward the east and the projecting tower.
- And so some temple servants just got together and decided to do some of the work. So each and every section had somebody who worked on it and they were working diligently at it.
- And next week when we get together we're going to see opposition to work. We're going to see complaints and demoralized attitudes by the people doing the work.
- And we're going to see where we are as far as finally getting this wall complete if possible. All right. So that's next week.
- [ 68 : 25 ] Nehemiah. What did we learn from Nehemiah? Let's try to recap briefly. First of all God wants everyone to do their part. And sometimes we do things we don't even feel that are our normal behaviors.
- But God wants us to dig in and do what needs to be done. What we're called to you do and especially using the gifts and talents God has given us. Number two God wants us to plan.
- God wants us to plan. He doesn't want us to just sit around waiting. Oh God will make it all happen. He wants us to have a plan and work the plan.
- But number three God wants us to pray and God wants us to turn to him and ask for him to guide us and show us what needs to happen in our lives and the lives around us.
- Number four there's nothing wrong with asking. Right? If Nehemiah didn't ask he wouldn't have gotten. He asked if he could go. He asked if he could have letters.
- [ 69 : 25 ] He asked if he could have Calvary. He asked if he could have timber and the answer was yes, yes, yes, yes. Nothing wrong with asking. Sometimes we ask and we receive.
- The Bible says ask and it will be given to you. All right? God wants to give to his servants especially if they're doing his work.
- It's okay to ask. But let's be sincere about it. Nehemiah didn't go to prayer with God for four minutes. He went for several days praying and fasting.
- We want this coronavirus to disappear. We need to be earnest in our request to God. Dear God, make this coronavirus disappear.
- Take away this darkness on the land. Bless all the people, the people we love, the people we don't know, the people of our church, the people we read about, the people we see on TV.
- [ 70 : 29 ] Bless all the people, Lord. Give them health. Give them hope. Give them possibilities. Be our strength, God, and walk through this valley with us and redeem us from the brokenness to give us wholeness again.
- Bless all the people, Lord, who are gathered tonight to study your word. Give them a special blessing tonight. it.
- And in all that we are and all that we do, watch over and care for us and help us to remember whose we are as we offer the prayer that you taught us saying, Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.
- Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, and forgive those who trespass against us.
- Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever.

[ 71 : 41 ] Amen. It's good to see you tonight. We look forward to seeing you again next week when we'll look at Nehemiah again. And we look forward to seeing you in all the aspects of our ministry and what we're doing.

Do something for God today. Go out and be a blessing because that's why God has blessed you. God bless and go in peace. Amen. God bless you.