

**“Let Us Arise and Build”**  
**(Studies in the Book of Nehemiah)**  
***Broken Walls—Broken hearts***

**Intro:** Last week I suggested a theme for the beginning of this new year—“I want to be a worker for the Lord.” We challenged each person to give an hour a week in service to the Lord in doing some good work(s) in the Lord’s name. Of course many of you already give this much and more; but we want to see the full potential of the congregation realized by each one being busy working for the Lord each week.

**One of the images the Scriptures give us of the church is that of a temple that is being built.**

***Peter likened the church to a temple in which stones are constantly being added:***

*“And coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected by men, but choice and precious in the sight of God, you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” (1 Peter 2:4–5)*

***Paul gives a similar description:***

*“So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God’s household, having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together is growing into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.” (Ephesians 2:19–22)*

***The church as a temple is being built stone by stone or brick by brick. But in addition the construction metaphor is also used to describe how we can help and encourage one another:***

*“Therefore encourage one another, and build up one another, just as you also are doing.” (1 Thessalonians 5:11)*

***The Greek word for “build up” or “edify” (oikodomeo) means literally “to build a house.”***

***And so as God’s people we are not only stones in the temple, but we also are masons who work to add others and to build them up in the faith.***

**But where can we go to find a great model of how to build?**

***I suggest the first six chapters of the book of Nehemiah. Every time I read this portion of God’s word I am impressed with the work God’s people did with the help of the Lord. Last week in my lesson I referred to Nehemiah’s statement in chapter 2:***

*Then they said, “Let us arise and build.” So they put their hands to the good work.” (Nehemiah 2:18)*

***This was a time when God’s people did it right and were rewarded with great blessing from God! And there is a lot we can learn from them about***

*motivation, about leadership, about partnership, about challenges in doing the Lord's work.*

*Let's begin today by talking about motivations as we read the first four verses of Nehemiah in a lesson I've entitled "Broken walls... broken hearts."*

## **Broken Walls...**

### *Nehemiah's circumstances*

*"THE words of Nehemiah the son of Hacaliah. Now it happened in the month Chislev, in the twentieth year, while I was in Susa the capital, that Hanani, one of my brothers, and some men from Judah came; and I asked them concerning the Jews who had escaped and had survived the captivity, and about Jerusalem."* (Nehemiah 1:1-2)

It was 444 BC. The power of Babylonians had been transferred by conquest to the Persians. In Susa was a citadel which served as the winter home of the Persia's kings; at this time Artaxerxes was king of the Persians; and Nehemiah, one of the people of God, occupied the trusted position of cupbearer to the king (v. 11).

The "captivity" refers to Jerusalem's destruction by the forces of Babylon under the rule of Nebuchadnezzar in 586 BC.

*Now on the tenth day of the fifth month, which was the nineteenth year of King Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, Nebuzaradan the captain of the bodyguard, who was in the service of the king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem. And he burned the house of the Lord, the king's house, and all the houses of Jerusalem; even every large house he burned with fire. So all the army of the Chaldeans who were with the captain of the guard broke down all the walls around Jerusalem. Then Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard carried away into exile some of the poorest of the people, the rest of the people who were left in the city, the deserters who had deserted to the king of Babylon, and the rest of the artisans. But Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard left some of the poorest of the land to be vinedressers and plowmen. (Jeremiah 52:12-16)*

Some of the Israelites had returned to Jerusalem a little over 90 years before; but their efforts to rebuild had been frustrated. After nearly sixteen years they had rebuilt the temple; but much of the city still remained in ruins—the protective walls of the city still broken down.

More recently the Israelites had attempt to restore the city walls; but the enemies of Israel in Palestine had pressured King Artaxerxes to order a halt to the work by force just as their efforts were getting underway (Ezra 4:6-23). And perhaps some of what had been restored was destroyed again! And so the people were badly demoralized by these developments.

Nehemiah inquires about their welfare and the message is not a good one.

***God's people faced a significant challenge:***

*“And they said to me, “The remnant there in the province who survived the captivity are in great distress and reproach, and the wall of Jerusalem is broken down and its gates are burned with fire.””*  
(Nehemiah 1:3)

Two words jump at us from the page—distress and reproach.

Distress—It was painful for the people to see their circumstances.

Reproach—The Israelites were the subject of embarrassment or ridicule. Their boast had been in God and now it appeared that their God had let them down. The enemies had occasion to mock them and oppress them. They felt disgrace and shame.

***Up to this point the walls of Jerusalem had remained in rubble for over 140 years! Yet all of that was to change because of the reaction of one man! Nehemiah is not only about broken walls; it’s about:***

### **Broken Hearts**

***Notice Nehemiah’s reaction to the report of his brethren:***

*“Now it came about when I heard these words, I sat down and wept and mourned for days; and I was fasting and praying before the God of heaven.”* (Nehemiah 1:4)

***Nehemiah wept and mourned:***

Even though he had done nothing to cause the state of affairs in Jerusalem, he suffered because of what had been caused by others, at another time.

Even though he was not personally affected by the distress and reproach of the survivors of Jerusalem, he was deeply moved by their plight.

Nehemiah’s tears are the evidence of how much he cared about the honor of the Lord and about the suffering and reproach of His people.

***It was this sorrow that drove Him to God and began a chain of events that would rebuild Jerusalem’s broken walls and restore the dignity and faith of the people.***

### **Great works sometime begin with tears.**

***What motivates God’s people to be workers for the Lord? In a word they must “care.”***

Every day we are surrounded by broken lives, people broken by sin, suffering. We are surrounded by lives shattered by sickness, divorce, death, addictions, and poverty.

We must carry a burden for the lost people in our families, in our workplaces, and in our society. We must carry a burden for the congregations we are apart of. We must carry a burden for the suffering of our brethren in time of need and even our neighbors.

***When we look at God’s greatest soul winners we see them carrying a burden of tears.***

Jesus wept for lost.

*And when He approached, He saw the city and wept over it, saying, "If you had known in this day, even you, the things which make for peace! But now they have been hidden from your eyes. "For the days shall come upon you when your enemies will throw up a bank before you, and surround you, and hem you in on every side, and will level you to the ground and your children within you, and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not recognize the time of your visitation." (Luke 19:41-44)*

Paul wept for lost.

*I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh, (Romans 9:1-3)*

*"Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears. (Acts 20:31)*

***It is sometimes out of painful and distressful circumstances and God's people arise to do their greatest work. It is not merely the tears that count, but what the tears motivate—a desire to make things better.***

*Those who sow in tears shall reap with joyful shouting. He who goes to and fro weeping, carrying his bag of seed, shall indeed come again with a shout of joy, bringing his sheaves with him. (Psalm 126:5-6)*

The idea of the psalm became the basis for our old spiritual song

"Bringing in the sheaves," a song about doing God's work.

***When we, like Nehemiah, truly care about God's work, then great things begin to happen. Broken hearts can move our mouths to speak, our hands to serve.***

***Do you have the concern of Nehemiah? Put that concern to work for the Lord each week.***

**Conclusion:** If you are not a Christian, I hope you will realize how much the Lord cared for your soul—the burden he carried for Jerusalem he carried for all the lost yet to come as well.

**Out of that concern he went to the cross for each of us.**