

**Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2022**

**Arise and Build.** Scripture: Nehemiah 2:11-20

It was 445 BC and God caused Cyrus the king of Persia to let the exiled Jewish people return to the homeland. Around 50,000 returned and settled in

and around Jerusalem. They built an altar to God for their worship, but when they turned their attention to rebuilding the Temple, the local people became angry, threatened them and informed the Persian authorities to put a stop to the work.

**What can they do?** The people had spent several decades in exile in Babylon and just wanted to return to Jerusalem and pick up where they had left off.

*Have you ever been faced with a problem you had to take care of but not sure how to go about it? You may seek help from family or friends but still undecided – if I do this – this may happen, yet if I don't do it what could be the consequences?*

### **Slide 1**

This was where Nehemiah was at. He was a high-ranking Jewish official living in the Royal Persian court. He had heard about the destruction in Jerusalem, the constant opposition from their enemies, rebuilding was put on hold and the outer walls of the city were in ruins.

*When facing a burden how long have you continued to pray for guidance from God?*



Nehemiah prayed for 4 months before his prayers were answered and he was allowed to go to Jerusalem.

## **Slide 2 Pray**

### **1. Turn to God for Help when Facing any Problem.**

Prayer is absolutely necessary for success in building God's kingdom. Nehemiah says: we made our prayer unto our God.' The result of this is that it is God's work! And as we do the Lord's work we need to depend very much upon Him for everything - for direction, for motivation, for power to serve, and for facing problems.

### **Night-time in Jerusalem**

Nehemiah had been in Jerusalem for 3 days when he slipped out during the night with a few other leaders. But he didn't tell them what God's plan was – he kept it a secret. So here they are, Nehemiah and 3 others skulking around in the dark with one donkey, keeping it quiet.

As the darkness deepened, Nehemiah went out to the Valley Gate, past Jackal's well, over to the Dung Gate to inspect the broken walls and the burnt gates.

He then crept to the Fountain Gate and the King's Pool, leaving his donkey behind as it couldn't get through. He continued in the dark on his own. No-one knew what he was doing.

### **Back in the safety of the house**

After Nehemiah returned, he told the Jewish leaders – priests, nobles and officials what trouble they were in. Jerusalem is in ruins and the gates destroyed by fire. He told them the plan – rebuild the wall.

Nehemiah continued explaining to them how gracious God had been and how God encouraged the King to release Nehemiah to come to

Jerusalem. Of course, there were those among them who scoffed at the plan but Nehemiah said “we serve God and will rebuild because God is faithful.”

*Have you ever allowed scoffers and critics to destroy the pursuit of a dream you have had, instead of trusting in God and His direction?*

### **Facing opposition**

Other people in the city continued to abuse and threaten the people even though Nehemiah continued to ensure the people that this was God’s plan and He would bring them success.

Nehemiah realized that the task of building the wall could not be done by just him so he persuaded the other leaders to work together with him. He filled them with the vision until they all shared it and committed themselves to it, saying, 'Let us rise up and build'. From that point onward it became the collective project of God' servants

*What do you do when you are working in a team and the work becomes more challenging, or you were facing opposition - have you made excuses and eventually left?*

### **Slide 3 A team fully committed to the work.**

The Jewish people worked as a team, in shifts and when it was not their turn to work, they didn’t rest but kept alert for signs of enemy intrusion. They sacrificed their comfort by staying overnight instead of going home to sleep and they didn’t have the luxury of changing their working clothes, except to wash them. From that point onward it became the collective project of God' servants.

*New ventures and goals are great, but if you don't pre-plan you may end up unsuccessful. This can lead to you labelling yourself as a failure.*

#### **Slide 4. Take Precautions to Prevent Problems Where Possible**

Prevention is better than cure so it is always good to have measures that will help to prevent problems from happening, rather than to deal with the problems when they come.

The Jewish people did this when they carried their weapons and devised an alarm system using people with trumpets positioned at strategic parts of the wall, in case of attack. This took extra effort but they were committed to God's work.

*I wonder if you have someone in your life who is a great encourager – you know when you are feeling less motivated, they just seem to have the right words to say?*

#### **Slide 5 Help and encourage one another.**

Nehemiah was an excellent encourager. Some people have the gift of doing this, and they should use it well. Notice the basis of his encouragement - Nehemiah directed the people to the Lord ('Our God shall fight for us.').

And that is the best way for us to motivate people to keep going on. Point them to the Lord. Let us realize that even a little word of encouragement you give can be a great help to God's work.

#### **Slide 6 – The wall is rebuilt in 52 days**

God's people were mobilized to rebuild the city walls of Jerusalem and even though they faced a number of problems, they overcame them and completed the wall in just 52 days.

## **What can we learn from God's scripture?**

As we build God's Kingdom, we need to work together. The tendency is for us to sit back and to let a few people run everything. But very soon the few who are working alone will feel tired, and when they find that the other members are not committed to the work, their motivation drops.

Let us build a good team spirit where everyone has a part or role to play in building the kingdom of God. If you do not know where to begin, get to know what needs to be done, use your own initiative not waiting to be asked to help and you will soon become aware of areas where you can serve.

Nehemiah helped the people see that it was no use just rebuilding the walls if they weren't also going to restore the city and the worshipping community at the heart of the city. They were going to have to restore people's hearts, especially when it came to generosity. They had to come back to God and rededicate themselves to Him, otherwise the entire venture would fail.

Every precious soul that is saved from sin by trusting in Jesus Christ needs to be moulded and shaped through the process of spiritual growth to take their place as faithful stones in God's building.

We know there are many who have no church home – church and faith somehow do not fit into their busy schedule anymore – sport and other activities have robbed the church and people of the hope that can only be found in Christ.

We also know there are many who are struggling, feeling hopeless and sadly medicating themselves with pills, illegal drugs, gambling and alcohol to make it through each day. Sometimes I feel a sense of sadness hanging over our community like a dark cloud. Lives are

broken. Homes lie in ruins. Marriages are on the rocks. You could say we are surrounded by ruins.

God wants us to build His kingdom, in the same way that the Lord stirred up the hearts of the Jewish people through Nehemiah to work together to build the walls of Jerusalem. Let's not use the excuse that we are only a small church with an even smaller budget. I believe we are called to be a small, vital congregation that will not settle for mere survival!!

**Are you thinking about rising up and helping us build? Then ask yourself:** Am I committed to this and am I willing to make sacrifices to serve God?

We saw how Nehemiah and the Jewish people came together in prayer and faith, to rebuild the wall in Jerusalem. Nehemiah said – the God of Heaven will give us success.

The same goes for us – we must have a Vision and a Mission now because we are to be a light in this community; we are to shine in the darkness; we are to be vital and we are to fulfil Christ's Mission and Reason for our existence – to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

**The community needs to know that:**

We are a church which meets not for ourselves but for them.

We are not an exclusive institution but an inclusive and loving church.

Our church is based on unconditional love, wanting all people to be a part of.

People can find hope, strength, love, courage and healing through being a part of our community which puts its faith in Jesus the Christ as Lord and Saviour.

There is so much potential within our congregation to accomplish much more for the Lord than what is being done presently.

The question is: Are we committed enough to this ministry? Commitment is the main ingredient needed to build up a strong and effective church. You must first of all be committed to Christ, as your Lord and Master. You should also be committed to obeying His Word that commands us to spread the gospel, to build up new Christians, and to minister to one another's needs.

We are called to have Nehemiah's kind of faith in God for our work in Chelsea. He calls us to build up the lives of people spiritually, which includes evangelism, discipleship and mission.