

United in Service (Nehemiah 3)

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[0 : 00] So if you have a Bible or a phone, you might like to turn there. So Nehemiah chapter 3, and I'll read the entire chapter.

So starting at verse 1. Eliashib, the high priest, and his fellow priests 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 Hananel.

And the men of Jericho built the adjoining section, and Zachar, son of Imri, built next to them. The fish gate was rebuilt by the sons of Hassanah.

Then they laid its beams and put its doors and bolts and bars in place. And Merrimoth, son of Uriah, the son of Hakoz, repaired the next section. And next to him, Mishulam, son of Berechiah, the son of Meheshavel, made repairs.

[1 : 03] And next to him, Zadok, son of Bahanah, 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.

The Deshanah gate was repaired by Jehoiada, son of Pesach, and Meshulam, son of Besodiah.

They laid its beams and put its doors with their bolts and bars in place.

Next to them, repairs were made by men from Gibeon and Mizpah. Melatiah, and Gibeon, and Jadon of Morinoth, places under the authority of the governor of Trans-Euphrates.

Uziel, son of Harahiah, one of the goldsmiths, repaired the next section. And Hananiah, one of the perfume makers, made repairs next to that.

They restored Jerusalem as far as the broad wall. Rephiah, son of Hur, ruler of a half-district of Jerusalem, repaired the next section. Now, joining this, Jadonah, son of Haramaph, made repairs opposite his house.

[2 : 10] And Hatosh, son of Hashanemiah, made repairs next to him. Makiah, son of Harim, and Hasov, son of Pahathmoab, repaired another section and the tower of the ovens.

Shalom, son of Halahesh, ruler of a half-district of Jerusalem, repaired the next section with the help of his daughters. The valley gate was repaired by Hanan and the residents of Zenoa.

They rebuilt it and put its doors with their bolts and bars in place. And they also repaired a thousand cubits of the wall, as far as the dung gate. The dung gate was repaired by Malkiah, son of Rekeb, ruler of the district of Beth-Harakem.

He rebuilt it and put its doors with their bolts and bars in place. The fountain gate was repaired by Shalon, the son of Col-Hoseth, ruler of the district of Mizpah.

He rebuilt it, roofing it over and putting its doors and bolts and bars in place. He also repaired the wall of the pool of Siloam, by the king's garden, as far as the steps going down from the city of David.

[3 : 23] And beyond him, Nehemiah, son of Asbuk, ruler of a half-district of Beth-Zur, made repairs up to a point opposite the tombs of David, as far as the artificial pool and the house of the heroes.

Next to him, the repairs were made by the Levites, under Reham, son of Bani. And beside him, Hashabiah, ruler of half the district of Kaliah, carried out repairs for his district.

Next to him, the repairs were made by their fellow Levites, under Binui, son of Henadad, ruler of the other half-district of Kaliah. And next to him, Ezra, son of Jeshua, ruler of Mizpah, repaired another section, from a point facing the ascent to the armory, as far as the angle of the wall.

Next to him, Barak, son of Zabai, zealously repaired another section, from the angle to the entrance of the house of Eliashib, the high priest. Next to him, Merimoth, son of Uriah, the son of Hakaz, repaired another section, from the entrance of Eliashib's house to the end of it.

The repairs next to him were made by the priests from the surrounding region. Beyond them, Benjamin and Hashabh made repairs in front of their house, and next to them, Azariah, the son of Mahasayad, the son of Aniyah, made repairs beside his house.

[4 : 50] Next to him, Binui, son of Ha'adad, repaired another section, from Azariah's house to the angle and the corner. And Palal, son of Uzzi, worked opposite the angle, and the tower projecting from the upper palace near the court of the guard.

Next to him, Padaiah, son of Parash, and the temple servants living on the hill of Ophel, made repairs to a point opposite the water gate, towards the east and the projecting tower.

Next to them, the men of Tekoa repaired another section, from the great projecting tower to the wall of Ophel. Above the horse gate, the priests made repairs, each in front of his own house.

And next to them, Zadok, son of Immer, made repairs opposite his house. Next to him, Shemiah, son of Shekariah, the guard at the east gate, made repairs.

Next to him, Hananiah, son of Shalamiah, and Hanan, the sixth son of Zalaf, repaired another section. Next to them, Shalem, son of Berechiah, made repairs opposite his living quarters.

[5 : 58] And next to him, Malkiaah, one of the goldsmiths, made repairs as far as the house of the temple servants, and the merchants, opposite the inspection gate, and as far as the room above the corner.

And between the room above the corner and the sheep gate, the goldsmiths and merchants made repairs. And that is God's word for us.

How about that? Thank you, Jeff, for reading that. And again, this is God's word for us. And so let's pray and let's ask God to help us to make sense of how this list of names could be relevant for us today as God's people.

Father, we come here needing your strength, not our own. We may say vows, we may make calls to you out. And yet we know that for your holy place to be strengthened, for your holy people to be strengthened, the strength cannot come from our own efforts.

It must come from a power of your Holy Spirit. So work in us, Lord. We don't have strength on our own to even understand a passage like this for us today. So work in us through your Spirit so that all the people of God here would know what it looks like to be united in service for Jesus.

[7 : 36] We pray all these things in Jesus' precious, precious name. Amen. There's a lot of building work that we just heard about.

And just down the road from our house, actually, is a whole lot of building work, too. And so I get the privilege of running past this on my morning runs and just seeing progress bit by bit of one of the most interesting building projects I've seen in a while, a flyover just sailing across the sky right in front of us.

So, you know, it's pretty impressive, but most of our neighbours don't notice all this, of course. Our neighbours, they notice the traffic jams that it causes every morning. I'm sure some of you do, too. They notice the detours that it's created just to get to the supermarket to grab some milk. They notice the empty shopping centre because no one wants to go through a construction site.

They often don't notice, though, the workers, but I think they should. So, you know, when you live locally, you can actually walk up to the building site. You can talk to some of these guys in Haiver's vests, right, and ask them, what's going on?

[8 : 46] When's the next piece coming in? And actually, the workers are amazing. They're so friendly. These guys were happy to pose for a photo. Others, I've had conversations with them, and they just explain how this whole building process worked.

So if I wasn't a civil engineer before, I'd have a greater appreciation for them. All right? So we don't often notice the workers, but I think we should. And I think it's the same in our passage today as well.

I know you did not come planning to sit through and think, I want a lesson on the great wall of Nehemiah. All right? Let's just lay it out there. That's true. And yet here we are.

And I actually want to suggest that Nehemiah 3 is a wonderful chapter because it shows us, it invites us to notice the work of God by the workers of God and to notice the God at work behind it all.

Now, a couple of preliminary comments. How on earth are we going to make anything out of this chapter for us as PCBC? Firstly, remember, Nehemiah, as we've journeyed through this book, we've done chapters one and two so far, this is biblical history.

[9 : 54] All right? This is Old Testament narrative telling something that truly happened. We must remember that this is an accurate account of the families, the very families who helped rebuild this wall to restore the holy city of Jerusalem in 445 A.B.C.

It's biblical history. But Nehemiah is also biblical history. All right? So this is not just a History Channel episode that we flick through when we're bored.

What we read here needs to stretch us beyond the facts that are on the page. What gate goes where, who did what, and so on. How to plan a working bee. Nehemiah 3 must help us see biblical history, i.e., who's the God of the Bible that is at work in their lives and in our lives too.

That's how we'll make sense of an Old Testament passage like this. My prayer is that by the end of this sermon, you'll discover from Nehemiah 3 that God's holy place is strengthened by all the people for all the people of God.

It's true back then, and it's true even today for a church like us on God's building projects. Now, chapter 3 is a very, very plain description.

[11 : 09] There's actually more behind the scenes. So it's a summary of who did what and how the whole of the wall was restored. What you'll hear next week in chapter 4 is some opposition they actually face during this time.

But in this passage, it's been crafted to focus just on the members that did the work. It's a very democratic passage. Every member ministry is being highlighted here in Nehemiah 3.

Nehemiah 3, in a sense, is how teamwork made the dream work for the people of Jerusalem. You notice the shape of the temple, right?

The temple walls, it was kind of like three-sided. The north bit, the west bit, and the east bit. I want to suggest that we look at Nehemiah 3 from three angles as well.

So again, let's first notice the work for God in this chapter. Have a look again at verse 1 in front of you, right? Verse 1. They went to work and they rebuilt the sheep gate.

[12 : 11] These are priests. And then further down, verse 3, a group of people, they put its doors and bolts and bars in place. And then we come to verse 4, and it says that these men, they repaired the next section.

Seems like three action words dominate this chapter, don't they, right? There's a kind of rebuilding or building, a repairing that's going on, and then setting or fixing the doors, right?

And these are the three distinct kind of Hebrew verbs that are being thrown at us from all directions of this building project. And in fact, the second word to repair, right, in some translations might say to work, it's actually repeated 34 times in this chapter.

But you might be asking, why did Jeff have to read it out 34 times? What's the whole point of writing this over and over and over and over again? Why are they doing this work? Well, it's because of what we learned last week from Pastor Barry, right?

Do you remember Nehemiah chapter 2? Nehemiah, you know, sneaks around at night, makes a plan, and then he announces to the people, we need to rebuild this wall. We need to rebuild this wall.

[13 : 27] And remember how the people responded, right, when they heard the vision. Chapter 2, verse 18 says this. And they said, let us rise up and build. So they strengthened their hands for the good work.

This is my more literal translation here, okay? Some of yours just say they began the good work. But literally, in the original Hebrew, it says they strengthened their hands for this good project.

Can you see the connection here? Nehemiah shares how God's gracious hand is upon them. God is at work. His grace is over these people.

And that strengthens people's hearts. So much so that they're now inspired to strengthen their hands and ready themselves to strengthen the walls. There's a chain here, right?

There's a pattern. There's a flow on a cause and effect. Because this is not an easy job. According to scholars and archaeologists, different parts of the wall would have required different amounts of work.

[14 : 28] Apparently, part of the wall, perhaps at the top, you know, it was so badly damaged or non-existent. Whereas maybe lower down the wall, you notice we moved a bit quicker because some of those parts would have been in better shape.

In fact, if you go to Jerusalem today, the bottom part, some of it is still there today that you can just walk around and take photos next to. Sure. Walls are walls.

But maybe you still have a deeper question. Why are walls so important? Not everyone played the same video games. And so not everyone has done things like build city walls and ancient empires or whatever.

Look, in modern warfare, we don't even appreciate city walls as much. Because who needs them, right? You just shoot a rocket over the top. But in ancient times, walls were critical. You think of Chinese emperors that, you know, spent hundreds of years building a great wall of China, right? Only for the, you know, barbarians to, you know, jump over the wall. So that didn't work. Or you think of American politicians, right? And, you know, at their rallies, it's build that wall, build that wall. [15:31] Okay, right? It never got built. That's okay. But we need to remember, though, in Jerusalem's case, this wall is more than just a physical barrier.

And we know this because, actually, we need to look at verse 1 again, right? Verse 1 tells us how the high priest built the sheep gate. And what happens as soon as they built it? They consecrated it. They dedicated it in some translations. The word here is the word where we get the word holy from, okay? They made it holy. They set it apart. And actually, this word appears twice, right, in verse 1. Do you see that? That repetition's important. No detail is left behind in God's word. The priests, I think, are mentioned first because, not because they're important, right?

They kind of blend in in that whole list of names later on. You'll see. They're mentioned first to highlight that the purpose of this wall is more than just to win an army battle.

[16:30] It's actually a spiritual purpose. Let me explain via an author called Greg Goswell. He explains it this way. Not by accident. The first building gang mentioned is the high priest and his brothers.

Why? In this way, the religious significance of the task is highlighted. What happens now is that the holiness of the temple is now extended to the city as a whole.

It's kind of like in the same way that, you know, in Lord of the Rings, when the walls of Minas Tirith, you know, are built, it marks out the whole city as the white city, right? Not just certain buildings inside it.

In the same way, when you rebuild and declare it holy, Jerusalem and its walls, you now have a wider definition of the house of God. It's no longer just that completed temple that we heard about in Ezra.

Now the holiness can extend to the city of Zion itself. How do you keep it holy? How do you set it apart, right, from unclean and defiling influences, perhaps from the neighbors around?

[17:36] Well, that's where we have gates and you put locks and you set things on them, right? And this is mentioned ten times in our chapter. Why? To remind us, right?

Now the Jews have this ability to shut out any wicked or unclean influences from the holy city itself. Perhaps it would be from merchants from overseas, right?

Maybe they're bringing in their fish through the fish gate, for example. But maybe they had some unclean influences that needed to be shut out. Maybe there were foreigners who used to come through the horse gate on the bottom right side, okay, to visit Solomon's now-destroyed palace. I don't know. Whatever the situation exactly, what seems clear is that a rebuilt, strengthened and secure wall didn't just have military significance. It had spiritual and social significance for God's people.

It was a sign of his holiness. It was a mark of God's protection. And so, firstly, we need to notice the significance of this work for God, all right?

[18:41] This wasn't just a work for work's sake. It was a work for God, his holiness, all right? His name, his people. But secondly, I want us to also pay attention to the workers of God.

Notice the workers of God here in chapter 3. The book is named Nehemiah, but chapter 3 is the only chapter in Nehemiah where we don't even hear Nehemiah's name explicitly mentioned. Did you notice that, right? I mean, after all this heroic praying and suffering and motivating, all the different hats he was wearing in the first two chapters, here's a list, chapter 3, that deliberately shifts our gaze away from the title character and to all the people on the streets.

You see, the Holy Spirit who's authored this book wants us to see not just the virtuous leader, but also the people hard at work, the workers of God.

And so, what can we learn about these workers of God here in chapter 3? I first notice that they're varied, aren't they? There's a lot of different kinds of workers. After Eliashiv, the high priest is named, actually, after that's a whole range of people, not just priests.

[19 : 54] Once we reach verse 32, you wouldn't have even remembered that Eliashiv was, you know, on that list, right? His name's forgotten. It just blends in with everyone else. The point here is that the whole community, not just one name, is involved in God's work.

Does that make sense? Yeah? The workers of God are varied. And actually, Nehemiah himself knows this, all right? Because check out chapter 4, verse 1, all right?

And you'll see that Nehemiah, when he keeps going with the story, he talks about things in the first person plural, we, right? We get opposition. But at the start, remember, in chapters 1 and 2, he was talking about everything in the first person.

I prayed before the king, right? I went out at night to scout out the city. Can you see the change in emphasis? After Nehemiah 3, we realize that it's not just I, it's we.

We are in this project together, one author says. No one is more important than another. Each person contributes to the final result that glorified God.

[21 : 05] There's a variety of workers here. Notice too, though, that the workers of God, they're actually equal. They're equal. Verse 2, you read of ordinary men of Jericho.

Okay? Jericho's not a, you know, doesn't get a high praise in the Bible, okay? But there's ordinary men of Jericho. People like Zakur. And they're working right next to the high priests. Right?

It'd be like me and one of the kids washing dishes together. That's the kind of picture that we want to imagine. Right? That's great. Other priests head down to the horse gate.

Okay? They could have just hung out around the temple. But no, they're willing to go all the way down to the horse gate. Right? Bottom right in. And to work there. Among the workers, you notice verse 11 and 12, you have sons like Melchizedek and Hashuv.

But also daughters like the daughters of Shalom. Right? The workers of God are equal here.

There's goldsmiths. There's perfumers.

[22 : 06] There's leaders and merchants. They are all people with diverse skills. Different walks of life. Young and old. And they're strengthening the wall shoulder to shoulder. That's the picture that we get here.

I don't know if you remember our community car wash. Right? What a sight. You had, you know, department leaders waving signs out, welcoming people in. You had civil engineers making coffee for guests.

You had pastors trying to usher traffic in. Right? Right? And you had people young and old standing next to each other, having completely different experiences in life scrubbing cars. That's the kind of picture that we have here in Nehemiah 3 as well.

Right? When the people of God, they're united in service. There's no big part. There's no small part. There's no, my job is more important and your job is less important. But notice too, I think, from our passage, workers of God are flexible.

The text actually never tells us explicitly how each family got, you know, to the part of the wall that they were working on. Well, some scholars maybe, you know, want to emphasize the leadership potential, a capacity of Nehemiah.

[23 : 15] He must have delegated everyone. Right? Okay? 42 different sections. He chose where they all went. It doesn't say that though. Others think that the people all volunteered, right?

Just the Holy Spirit moved everyone and they just magically and miraculously moved to the part of the wall that they were led to. Okay? It doesn't say that either. All right? So what is it?

Well, maybe it's both. We're not sure. But then maybe some of our eyes were drawn to verse 14. Right? Have a look at verse 14. Right? That gate.

Oh. That gate. Did Nehemiah really assign Malchijah to work at the Dung Gate? You know? Or actually did Malchijah volunteer to work there?

Think about it. This district ruler. Okay? Someone with high class and status. Stooping down to strengthen the smelliest part of Jerusalem's walls.

[24 : 13] A sacrificial service, is it not? And look, sometimes there's a connection. Verse 17, Hashaviah repaired the part in his district. So kind of working local. Verse 23, Benjamin, Hashub, and Azariah got to work from home, as it were.

Made repairs in front of their house. But in most of these places and names, there's actually no obvious connection. And so I think we need to take the point home that people just knew the need and they lent a hand.

They found that there was a need and they just helped out. That is how you and I support a vision that is set before us by God. To strengthen God's dwelling place.

And you know what? This is the picture in the New Testament too as well, isn't it? Right?

Remember the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians? We heard this book last year. Now you are Christ's body. And each of you is a member of us.

1 Corinthians 12, 27. 27. When you and I are motivated to serve by selfish interests, I don't know, then maybe you'll be tempted to choose roles that make you look good.

[25 : 21] Or make the most of your gifts that you're the best at. Or maybe just suit your schedule.

Have you ever heard someone say, oh, I'm not really called to serve that way, but when it really just means I don't want to do that kind of job.

But when you and I are motivated by God's interests, then you and I, we will serve wherever, whenever, and however long He needs us to.

After all, was it not the Lord Jesus who for the joy set before Him, He endured the cross, He despised the shame? That is the selfless servant. And that is the same heart that you and I need when there's, I don't know, a dungate to repair.

Or there's toilets to scrub. Or there's meetings to attend. Or there's cups to wash. As we strengthen God's dwelling place, this is the servant heart that we need.

Workers of God who are flexible, who are equal, and who are of a whole range of different gifts and skills. Look, it's a pleasure to preach, but nothing would get done if all we did was just listen to preaching.

[26 : 33] It's amazing to worship together, but if you only did worship and listened to it all day, that's not church either. God's people work with their hands. We drive youth, right, to and from things.

We balance budgets. We make music. We plug things in. We make things work. Or we work in our workplaces. We plan cities. We deliver packages.

We study hard. We do all these things, all for God's glory. So we've looked at the work for God here in Nehemiah 3.

We've thought about the workers of God. But even with all this, how does this relate to you and me today? Is this just something for Jewish people to think about?

And this is where it only makes sense to us, Nehemiah 3, once we start to notice the God at work behind it all. So that is the third angle that we need to look at this passage from.

[27 : 37] We want to notice the God at work behind it all. Anyone here love building Lego from time to time? Yeah? Okay. Who's one of the ones that like to read the instructions?

And, you know, there's like a book with 50 steps and, you know, you go through step by step. Yep. Okay. All right. Smart. Okay. That's where you don't make mistakes. And you get to like step 49.

You're like, oh, I should have read it. Okay.

Sometimes, though, when you look at a tiny part, especially when the Lego is like in like five different sections, it's just really hard to see how this little part makes sense. Right?

In the grand design. I don't know. Maybe this is what your work feels like. Maybe if you just have a very small role in your company, sometimes it's hard to know how you're really contributing to the company's efforts.

Maybe if you're a parent here and you just drop kids off to school, you don't actually teach them.

And it's hard sometimes to know, are they learning anything? I don't know. I just dropped them off.

Right? And so sometimes we need to be reminded of the big picture, even when we do a small part.

[28 : 37] Right? And so here is a small part. Nehemiah 3. And we need to see the big picture of where Nehemiah 3 fits in. And I can suggest two ways we can see this fit into the big picture.

Firstly, God is at work even in Nehemiah 3 because he is fulfilling prophecy. Nehemiah happens after the exile.

So that means there must have been an exile. Right? This was Israel's lowest moment. They were exiled to Babylon because of their sin and their wickedness. And during this time, the prophet Jeremiah gave a prophecy.

And it goes like this. The days are coming, declares the Lord, when this city will be rebuilt for me from the tower of Hananel, sound familiar, to the corner gate.

The whole valley will be holy to the Lord. So even as the Israelites were being marched out and taken captive to Babylon, their city in ruins, Jeremiah reminds them one day the city will be rebuilt.

[29 : 35] Can you see the significance now of what happens in Nehemiah 3? It's God keeping his promises. And remember though, Jeremiah telling us this prophecy. He's the same prophet that foretells just a few verses earlier in chapter 31 that he's going to make, God's going to make a new covenant with the people of Israel and Judah.

Right? It's a covenant, Jeremiah 31, 33 says, where God's law won't just be on tablets of stone only. It'll be written on people's hearts. This is an era defining moment, right?

A time when all of people will truly know the Lord. A time when God will forgive wickedness, remember sins no more. It's a significant change.

For every Christian who reads through their Bibles, goes to Nehemiah 3 and skips it, right? There's an ancient Jew who has treasured this list because it's saying, God, praise you.

You've kept your promises. And I'm so waiting for you to keep this promise too. So can you see? Rightly understood. Nehemiah 3, when it fits in the big picture, it's far more than just a list of workers around an ancient city wall.

[30 : 49] This is fulfilling God's promises. It's saying that one day, not only this city will be rebuilt, but more is coming. A new covenant.

It's going to be a time in biblical history, a time when God's people, they're not just out there building His dwelling place. It's going to be a time when God's people become His dwelling place.

And how? How? Well, God tells us, not just about His plan to fulfill prophecy here in Nehemiah 3.

God tells us that He's also foreshadowing a better city. Ephesians chapter 2 reminds us of this fact. Now that we see it, this side of the cross, right?

Ephesians reminds us that Jesus Christ, now that He's our chief cornerstone, in Him there's a whole building joined together. It rises to become a holy temple in the Lord.

[31 : 49] And in Him, you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by His Spirit. Can you see the connection? There's a new building project at work.

Hebrews 11, 16 talks about how, you know, God has prepared for all these Old Testament people a better city for His people. A heavenly one.

A heavenly one. 1 Peter 2, verse 5 reminds us that in Christ, you and I, we're now living stones, actually. Chosen by God, precious to Him.

And we're being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood. Can you see the connection? This is the gospel, isn't it not?

Because our Lord Jesus died outside the city walls of Jerusalem, if you and I turn from our sins, we trust in this Jesus, we join His new building project.

[32 : 48] It's the church. It's the church. We join this worthy building project. We turn away from all our worthless projects that we pour our time and attention to.

And all for what? But we join a project that will last forever because the church is built on the foundation of God and He lasts forever. His people will last forever.

His Jesus, His Lord, is coming back to make all things right. In Christ, the holy city, you see, is now a spiritual people, far more than just a physical location.

In Christ, God's Spirit, amazingly, no longer sits within some city walls, right? It's far better than that. The Spirit now is unleashed.

He dwells in the hearts of brothers and sisters from every tongue, nation, and tribe. And we are part of that project. We are now the living stones for a living temple, displaying God's glory in outposts all over the world, including this one.

[33 : 53] Does that excite you? It should. This should excite you far more than the building projects that you and I pour our time and attention into. I don't know.

Father's Day, I get lots of ads, right? Start building this thing, right? Start investing in this thing. Hey, start a new hobby. Sure. I love hobbies. But this building project, the church, this is the hobby.

This is the work that will last forever. Okay? I could build 10 kites. I could clock 10 video games. And none of that will last into eternity.

But God's dwelling place, strengthening it, building it, guarding it, that's the kind of work that matters. That's the kind of work that we'll see into eternity, is it not? It's far more important of eternal value than all the stuff that we just invest our time into sometimes.

It's strengthening what God calls us to strengthen, his true temple, his church. And look, I want you to see the connection. If strengthening Nehemiah's walls could protect against unholy, unclean influences, then we want to ask ourselves at the church, how are our defenses?

[35 : 08] It's going to take more than just a leader to preach at you to change that, right?

It's got to take members at every part of the wall, defending, building, repairing. Every family strengthening their children against the awful effects of adultery, pornography.

It has to be a collective effort. Each of us working at our sections of the wall. Strengthen the wall. Build the gates. Protect God's dwelling place.

And look, if strengthening Nehemiah's walls helped make Jerusalem a holy city among the nations, a light in a dark place, how is our church doing building that kind of lighthouse mentality?

Mentality. That culture that says we want to display God's beauty to the nations around us. It's going to take more than just one or two ushers to make this place a welcoming place.

[36 : 12] It's going to take all of us, right? It's going to take more than just amazing coffee to show we're hospitable. It takes all of us. Can I suggest one tip for every member of ministry that could really kickstart things here?

One tip. Next time you come to English service, before you come, pray about where you'll sit. I know it seems silly, but think about it, right?

We like to slip in the back rows, right? Or we like to pick our usual spots. We like to hang out with the same old people that we've seen since we were babies.

Pray about which section you'll sit. Pray about, Lord, who can you lead me to that needs encouragement? Lord, who is someone I've never met and is part of this building project that I want to get to know better?

I need to get to know better. Who is a visitor that, oh, okay, I could at least say hi. I may have nothing in common until I realize something and talk to them. Can I suggest pray about where you'll sit next week?

[37 : 23] Strengthen her city. Strengthen her citizens here at PCBC. Look, Nehemiah 3, I think it's a wonderful picture, isn't it? A people united in service, strengthening God's city.

And while we may no longer have this particular city to rebuild today, praise God that we are a temple of the Holy Spirit. And so our building project continues.

In fact, it's far more important. And it cannot be done by just one leader directing traffic. It needs all of us, living stones, strengthening God's dwelling place, led by our servant King Jesus.

And our blessed hope is that this servant King will one day return. And do you know how the Bible ends? It's amazing.

On that glorious day, we see this in Revelation, Jesus brings a perfect city to earth. None of this three-sided, you know, who makes three-sided walls these days anyways, right?

[38 : 23] None of this three-sided stuff. Perfect in height, depth, width, and breadth, the new Jerusalem. Made holy forever. A place where every impure and unholy thing is banished to hell for eternity.

All that's left, holy forever. And it's a city actually without walls. Who needs walls when the Lord Jesus has made all things new? Who needs walls when he invites everyone who trusts him to feast at the last supper forever?

There's a day when God dwells in his people forever. And it's going to be a beautiful day. But until that day, that glorious day, we keep trusting this light to light up our lives.

And we keep trusting this light to help us to help us shine forth his glory and work for him united in service. Shall we pray? Our gracious God, we pray to you now, our servant king.

The one who laid down his life for us. We had nothing worthy of saving. And yet, Lord Jesus, you modeled for us what it looked like to serve sacrificially.

[39 : 48] So we love you. We worship you. We thank you for this word that you brought to us through Nehemiah chapter 3. And we ask that we would continue responding in worship. We pray these things in Jesus' name.

Amen.