

Nehemiah 3.1-32

Clint Le Page

Main point - Serve together as you're able to build Christ's church

I've been to a few school, uni and college graduation ceremonies.(SLIDE)

And you always wait, for your own, or your loved ones' name to be called.

And maybe you know how it can be very tedious, and test your patience and endurance as you wait, and then clap or cheer.

Maybe Jews reading Nehemiah ch 3 years after the fact, were like that, waiting for their relative's name to be mentioned, and all the rest just blurred into the background.-----

But listening to Neh 3 can be like you're a stranger rocking up to a graduation service, who doesn't even have one person you know on the list.

So it can be hard to see the relevance for us.-----

I realise that passages like Neh ch 3 we can struggle to even read through.

A chapter so full of foreign, hard-to-pronounce names and places, seems so far-removed and irrelevant to us.

Maybe you've skipped or skimmed the chapter in your personal bible reading, or it just leaves you confused.---

But when we believe that(SLIDE) **all of Scripture** is God-breathed and useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training us in righteousness, and to equip us for every good work (2 Tim 3.16-17);

And when Paul says in 1 Cor 10, that Old Testament people and events are written down as examples for us (1 Cor 10.11),

Then if we skip them, we are the poorer for it.

We miss out, and will fail to learn and grow as God intends.

So while it's not easy, and we might struggle to see how passages apply like this relate to us, I hope we'll all see how the main points really do apply.

People of many backgrounds work together in this common project, and God wants us, his people to work together too.

Not in the mission of building a wall, but in building the church of our Lord Jesus, building his kingdom.-----

Remember, we are in this series through the OT book of Nehemiah.(SLIDE)

In about 585BC the Babylonians destroyed the Jerusalem temple, and deported or exiled many of the remaining people.

Then in 537 BC the first Jewish exiles returned to Jerusalem.

The temple was rebuilt in 515 BC.

But 70 yrs later Nehemiah heard that Jerusalem's walls were still destroyed.

And he was moved by God to return to Jerusalem, and lead the rebuild project.

And in ch2 the people of Jerusalem and Judah have just committed to rebuild the wall.

Today I'll be summarise Neh 3 under **one heading, Who built the wall.(SLIDE)**

We'll look at some details in the text, then consider how the main point applies to us.

The chapter is filled with the names of people and places isn't it.

Obviously we don't have time to consider each one, and nor do we know anything else about most of the people mentioned.

But looking at the **table on the screen** you can see who builds the Jerusalem wall.

It is likely that Nehemiah, the gifted administrator and team leader, has assigned portions of the work to all these people.

The first group of people listed is the **priests and Levites**, the religious people

Chapter 2 finished with the leaders all saying, 'we are [God's] servants, we will start building', and now we see the high priest and the priests, 'began rebuilding'.

They build the wall near the temple.

Interestingly, 'Eliashib's' name in Hebrew means, 'the Lord will restore'. 😊

As I mentioned last week, we don't know the exact locations of all of these places.

But the **Sheep Gate**, v1,(**SLIDE**) is the place sheep were brought in for the sacrifices.----

Looking at v4 and v21 we see Meremoth and his family presumably, repair two sections.

Meremoth, along with Baruch in v20 are actually priests, according to Ezra ch's 8 (v33) and 10 (v28), and they make repairs next to the high priests house.

But as well as people in religious work, you have **business and tradespeople**.(**SLIDE**)

Goldsmiths, perfumers, and merchants in v8 and 31-32.

Interestingly, Uzziel's name in **v8**, means 'God is my strength'.

And a Jew reading this would know this as they hear Hen 3 read.

Uzziel built, along with the rest, by God's strength.

Remember that's what the leaders replied in ch2v20, they will start building, and the God of the heavens will grant them success.

God's hand and goodness and grace is with them.-----

Please also notice, that religious leaders, perfume makers and people in other business, not used to doing building or construction, get in and do it, and contribute.

They and their families.-----

You have people coming from **8 other towns and regions** outside Jerusalem, from the tribes of Judah and Benjamin – Jericho (2), Gibeon and Meremoth (7), and people from Zanoah (13) in Judah, who repair nearly 500 meters of wall.

People from Tekoah build two sections in v5 and v27, even when their **nobles** don't lift a finger to help them.

Of all the people from many backgrounds who get their hands dirty and work, these nobles are the only ones labelled as refusing to join the work, refusing to serve.

They refused to put their shoulders to the work, as the King James Version put it.

Maybe they proudly thought hard-labour, working with timber and stone masons, was beneath them.

Just like rich and powerful people, rulers and leaders today believe cleaning floors or toilets is beneath them.

But how shameful to be named like this for all to see.

Imagine you were one of those mentioned publicly, as not joining the project?-----

That everyone is working together, and you refuse to join in such a good work?

But other **rulers** do commit to the rebuild, they and their people, we presume.

The two men who rule half of Jerusalem each, in **v9 and 12**.

And Shallum there is noted to have his daughters working with him.

It was men and women working together.-----

Then in **vv14-18** you have more rulers of different districts, from Judah and Benjamin, who've come with their people to help rebuild the wall.

Shallum in v15 clearly did lots.-----

And then there's many **individuals** mentioned in the whole chapter.

These are likely heads of families, so describes families working together to repair sections of the wall.

I wonder how your family would go in a common project?-----

Interestingly, Imri in **v2**, was one in the first group who came back from Babylon to Jerusalem, Ezra 2.34. Now his son and grandchildren are likely building the wall.----

I know grandparents are encouraged to see their family serving the Lord.-----

The name 'Malkijah' mentioned in v11,14, and 31 means 'my Lord is King'.

'Azariah' in v23, his name means 'the Lord has helped'.

Hananiah in v30 means 'the Lord has favoured'.

And the other Nehemiah mentioned here, in **v16**, his name means 'the Lord comforts'.

Just little signs that the Lord is at work in, and working through, and for his people.

Their own names testify to God's grace and faithfulness.

Some of these individuals, only repair sections near their house (10,21,23,28-29, 30).

Others do more, according to their means and resources I am sure.

And note Baruch in **v20**, how he worked 'diligently'.

It's a word meaning hot or burning – so he got hot n' sweaty as he worked hard.

Piecing all of this together, thinking about the **main points**.

This has obviously required **phenomenal organization**.

Nehemiah the author and team leader, is not recorded as building, but we rightly assume that he has coordinated this mammoth task and project.

Through his God-directed plans, people built sections of wall and gates, and some right outside their front door.

Just think about it – people from all walks of life, working together, starting the rebuild at the same time, in a huge and complex construction project.

Nehemiah was a gifted administrator.-----

And please notice the repeated language in nearly every verse, of so-and-so repairing, '**next to them**', '**after him**', '**beside him**', from v4 on. **(SLIDE)**

Priests and perfumers, goldsmiths and guards, temple servants and merchants, rulers and ordinary men and women from all walks of life.

People from outside the city and some from other provinces.

Everyone moving rubble, carrying stones and materials, assisting those with construction skills.

People building and repairing a wall, working beside one another, needing to join their work together in a unified whole.

I think it's wonderful. A wonderful example of unity and working together for a common goal and purpose.

They are building something together.

Those who worked on the north wall **(SLIDE)** are mentioned in v1-5, the west wall in v6-13, the south wall in v14-15 then the east wall from v16-32.

This is all happening at once.

They are all **working together**, in different places, in different ways, but for the common building project.

Full cooperation really, in a simultaneous and unified great building project.

Except for those nobles in v5, everyone is willing to get involved and help rebuild the wall, working together.

And the whole job will be done in under 2 months.

It reminded me that this is not like the north-east link, **(SLIDE)** which I live next to – it's been going for ages and won't be done for three more years.

Whereas the Chinese built this bridge **(SLIDE)** in 43 hours. They know how to work in a fast and unified way.

And this is what applies to us. **Next point, (SLIDE), We build together.**

The main point of Neh 3 is that God's people work together to rebuild the Jerusalem wall.

But what is it that we are to build?-----

Well, the Lord Jesus Christ, has come, lived, died, risen again and returned to heaven.

And he now rules with all authority in heaven and on earth (Matt 28.18).

And the Lord Jesus said we too need to build.

We need to **build our lives on the rock**, not the shifting sand, don't we.

At the end of his Sermon on the Mount, in **Matthew 7.24(SLIDE)**, Jesus said,
²⁴ "Therefore, everyone who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. ²⁵ The rain fell, the rivers rose, and the winds blew and pounded that house. Yet it didn't collapse, because its foundation was on the rock.

But the fool built his house on the sand.-----

If we're going to act on Jesus words, and obey them, we need to believe them.

We need to believe and do what Jesus said, we need to trust and obey what he said.

By trusting and obeying Jesus, we build our life on the rock.

Is that you?-----

Then when Jesus is our rock and foundation, we need to get on board with what Jesus is doing.

We need to get on board with what Jesus is building.

And what he is building, even now, is his church.-----

When Luke who followed the apostle Paul around, wrote the book of Acts, Jesus had already lived, died, risen and ascended to heaven.

But Luke opens the book of **Acts** with these words (**1.1-SLIDE**)

'I wrote the first narrative, Theophilus, about all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day he was taken up'.

And the author is saying that in the Gospel of Luke we read of all that Jesus began to do and teach.

Now in the book of Acts, through the Holy Spirit Jesus is continuing to work.

Jesus is actually building his church, by his Spirit.-----

That's what Paul teaches in **Eph 4.(SLIDE)**

Eph 4.7-11 – Each one of us, every follower of Jesus has been given grace, a gift, at least one spiritual gift, by Christ.

Jesus, the Son of God, descended from heaven, to be born as human being, suffer n' die on cross, to pay for our sins.

Then the risen Lord Jesus ascended to heaven, and not only poured out the Holy Spirit (Acts 2.33), **v11** says, he has given certain word-gifts to the church.

People gifted for Gospel ministry, word-ministry – even still today - evangelism and teaching.

And what is the role of the apostolic word of God, and evangelists, pastors and teachers who proclaim it?

It is to equip the saints, (**SLIDE**) the believers, for the work of ministry, their works of ministry.-----

And as you all, God's set apart chosen people, Jesus' people, do your work of ministry, it is to 'build up the body of Christ'.

Not just me but you have a role to build up the body of Christ.-----

When you turn away from ignoring, rejecting and disobeying God, and turn to Jesus in faith and trust, you join his body, his spiritual body, with every other Christian.

We're all parts and members of his body, united by the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ in us.

As **v16,(SLIDE)** says, the growth of the body, all comes 'from him', it's all by his sovereign grace, his action.

Yet, the body of Christ, the church, grows, and will be built up in love, by the proper working of each part.-----

And I am convinced that **GSF**, our Get Some Fun kids holiday program in January perfectly illustrates this, and us building together.

At GSF we plan and pray, and then spend 4 days together, working in unity together, for the common purpose of sharing the Gospel with kids so they can be saved and grow.

And I'm always so encouraged seeing people serve together in different ways – admin, first aid, teaching, acting, singing, dancing; building, doing craft, talking, listening, encouraging.

Even those not on team, contribute to goal of growing young followers of Jesus – by their prayers, encouragement and support.

It's a joy and encouragement to serve together in this way.-----

And actually we need more people on team.

We have a smaller team at this stage.

And if we had more volunteers to serve on team, it could mean the difference between having 100 kids vs 150 kids attend.

If you'd like to join us please let Clarissa, me or the church office know.-----

But GSF is a perfect example of us working together for the Kingdom of Jesus and growth of his church.-----

The body of Christ, will only grow, grow to maturity, as each individual part does its work.---

I'm not saying you should feel obligated to serve at GSF. But I am saying Jesus asks all his people to serve in his great mission of building his church.

We all have a part to play, we all need to work together.

And this is also what Paul spoke about in **Romans 12** which was read for us.

Because of God's mercy shown to us in the Gospel, we now offer our lives sacrificially in worship to God, worshipping him, living for him in all of life.

And in **Rom12.5(SLIDE)** 'we who are many are one body in Christ', individuals who are deeply connected.

And we've been given different gifts by God's grace.

And we are to use who different gifts to serve.

We speak, teach, encourage, give; show mercy, and serve in different ways.

But notice **v11(SLIDE)**, everyone is told, 'Do not lack diligence in zeal; be fervent in the Spirit;^[c] serve the Lord.'

This is God telling us to serve the Lord' zealously, fervently, passionately, diligently like Baruch in Neh 3.

And we all have a role to play so the body of Christ grows, in number and more like Christ.

I'm not Nehemiah, and I'm not going to assign you a job.

We work out how people will serve as they talk with their leaders.

Come and talk with staff member, elder or your growth group leader, about different ways you might serve.

Pray and look around, there's lots of opportunities.

We want to grow followers of Jesus here at Bundy, see people saved as they come under the lordship of Christ, and grow to maturity in him.

And we all are to serve together, for this great mission and purpose.-----

There's so many ways to serve the Lord and his kingdom, at and outside of Bundy.

You can clean the building so we can keep using it for Gospel ministry.

You can serve on PA, AV so the word of God can be heard clearly.

You can teach the Bible in growth group, or to kids or youth, or 1-1.

Serving in the kitchen helps us to welcome newcomers in love, and helps people to hang around for encouraging conversations that can build each other up.

We're all in the spiritual building business.-----

When you give your money generously, you help build the church.

When, because of limited health or energy or capacity, you can pray – and that is so vital.-----

Others can serve with their cooking skills, tradie skills; plumbing, building, painting, fixing gifts.-----

Or tell others about Jesus, at work, at uni, or invite a friend to read a Gospel with you.
If you're at CU, attend and make the most of the training they offer, so you can be equipped to build Christ's kingdom, and serve the church for the rest of your life.

The training I got at CU has stayed with me and blessed my ministry for decades.---

And consider how you might serve with someone, or on a team.

At Bundy we want to serve in teams, with unity and purpose.

Encourage others to serve with you, and serve together.-----

However you serve, please take a moment to **think about how your ministry contributes to the building up of others, and growth of Christ's people & kingdom?---**

For example, if you serve on a welcoming team at 5pm, remember you're not just there to greet people with a smile and help them print a name tag.

You're showing the love of Jesus, to lost sheep, and to your brothers and sisters.

You play a part in helping newcomers integrate into the body of Christ here, and facilitate people gathering so they can grow as disciples of Jesus.

Remember the bigger discipleship purpose of your building.-----

Team leaders, maybe you could come up with a big prayer for the team, that reminds you all of your purpose.-----

And let's all build and serve, remembering the Lord will build his church, build it through us.
Psalms 127 says,(SLIDE) Unless the Lord builds a house, its builders labour over it in vain.

But Jesus will build his church,(**Matt 16.18-SLIDE**) and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.

So we serve on the winning side, in a mission which will succeed, and in something that is sooo- worth it.-----

The Lord will build his house, his church, by saving and growing his people.

And he chooses to use you and I in that.

So give yourself to his mission with commitment.-----

In Neh 3 we heard about how people from all sorts of backgrounds worked together in unity to build the wall.

They all took responsibility to build their part, according to their means.

So take responsibility to play your part, in the strength the Lord gives you, in building the church, for the growth of your brothers and sisters.

Build your life on Christ, and be willing to be used by him.

Serve with us, as you're able to build up Christ's church.-----

Let's pray.