

Restoring Part 7

- Our study of how God restores His people is coming to end
 - Over the past seven weeks, we watched as God's fury burned against the idol worship in one part of the nation of Israel
 - And we learned the reality of judgment for unbelief
 - Then we saw God take the other half of Israel into captivity in Babylon over their repeated sins against him
 - And we learned about inevitability of God's discipline for his children
 - And we discovered three stages to the discipline
 - The removal of ungodly leaders
 - The elimination of false teachers
 - The destruction of unholy worship
 - But then we saw God patiently and mercifully begin to restore the nation of Israel, just as He promised He would
 - First, God sent Zerrubable and other men to lead the nation back into the land
 - And they rediscovered true worship with an honest heart and utter dependence on God
 - Secondly, God sent Ezra, a man with a heart to know God's word, to live according to it, and to teach others the same
 - And through Ezra, the nation grew stronger in their obedience and their devotion to righteousness
 - Though not without stumbles and shortcomings
 - Finally, God brings new leadership
 - A man named Nehemiah
 - A man burdened and called to defend and lead God's people

- Yet one who comes as a representative of God's leadership
 - Not to Lord over the people, but to serve them
- And last week we watched him call the people to work along side him to accomplish the Lord's work
- At this point in our study, we could easily begin an extended walk through the text of Nehemiah
 - If we did, we would learn a great deal about how godly leadership does it's work
 - But in the interests of our study, I want to end our study today focusing on one final question
 - What does God expect godly leadership to accomplish for the sake of his people?
 - In Nehemiah's case, he was drawn to travel back to Israel because the city lacked a wall
 - But was a new wall God's primary focus?
 - When God brings new leadership to us today, what purpose can we expect Him to accomplish for us?
 - Let's examine 4 clues in the story of Nehemiah to answer that question

[Neh. 3:1](#) ¶ Then Eliashib the high priest arose with his brothers the priests and built the Sheep Gate; they consecrated it and hung its doors. They consecrated the wall to the Tower of the Hundred *and* the Tower of Hananel.

[Neh. 3:2](#) Next to him the men of Jericho built, and next to them Zaccur the son of Imri built.

- The third chapter of Nehemiah begins with an interesting (some might say repetitive) list of all the workers and their assignments
 - These are the teams joined to rebuild the wall around Jerusalem
 - The list begins with Eliashib, the grandson of Jeshua and his brothers building the Sheep Gate
 - Northern gate (about 12 o'clock)

- And they filled in the wall between two towers that marked the center strongholds on the northern wall
- And we also learn that this family had the help of at least two other families
 - Family meant a clan, a large group
- Then scan down the page
 - Verse 3 another clan rebuilt the Fish Gate also on the northern wall
 - Verse 6 has another clan building the Old Gate on the extreme NW corner
 - Verse 13 the team for the Valley Gate on the West side of the city
 - Verse 14 handled the Refuse Gate (Dung Gate) on the extreme Southern end
 - Just a little up the eastern wall the Fountain Gate in verse 15
 - Verse 28 has the priests lending a hand on the Horse Gate on the NE corner
 - And so on
- What's most interesting about this chapter is the large number and wide variety of people working in this project
 - Isn't remarkable how Nehemiah was able to engage so many different families in such a large project
 - Remember, we noted that Nehemiah's first act in Jerusalem was the call the people to join in the work God had given him
 - And evidently, they responded
 - I admire him because I have trouble getting my entire family to participate in an afternoon of yardwork
 - He had thousands of family members working together
- So it seems that our first clue concerning God's true purpose in bringing new, godly leadership is
 - Teaching God's people the importance of working together

- Of getting involved and lending a shoulder to the hard work of serving the Lord
- We don't know if everyone helped
 - Maybe some stood by
 - Maybe they said it's not my job
- But the real story here is how many did join in
 - No one was an expert wall builder
 - But God doesn't need our expertise
 - He wants workers
- Clue #2 begins chapter 4

[Neh. 4:1](#) ¶ Now it came about that when Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, he became furious and very angry and mocked the Jews.

[Neh. 4:2](#) He spoke in the presence of his brothers and the wealthy *men* of Samaria and said, "What are these feeble Jews doing? Are they going to restore *it* for themselves? Can they offer sacrifices? Can they finish in a day? Can they revive the stones from the dusty rubble even the burned ones?"

[Neh. 4:3](#) Now Tobiah the Ammonite *was* near him and he said, "Even what they are building—if a fox should jump on *it*, he would break their stone wall down!"

- As the work begins in earnest, the voices of the enemy rise up again
 - This time it's a local tribal leader and his armies
 - The word for wealthy in verse 2 is *chayil*, which means army
 - They bring their show of force and they try to intimidate and discourage the people
 - Now the intimidation and threats weren't a surprise
 - As a man of God, Nehemiah knew what to expect
 - And he responds as a godly man should

[Neh. 4:4](#) ¶ Hear, O our God, how we are despised! Return their reproach on their own heads and give them up for plunder in a land of captivity.

[Neh. 4:5](#) Do not forgive their iniquity and let not their sin be blotted out before You, for they have demoralized the builders.

- Nehemiah prays to God for protection from these men and for God to exact vengeance

[Rom. 12:19](#) Never take your own revenge, beloved, but **leave room** for the wrath of God, for it is written, “VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY,” says the Lord.

- Prayer is always our first and best defense against the enemy and His attacks
- But I love this chapter because it demonstrates an important Biblical principle
 - There is a time for prayer
 - And there is a time for action

[Neh. 4:6](#) ¶ So we built the wall and the whole wall was joined together to half its *height*, for the people had a mind to work.

[Neh. 4:7](#) ¶ Now when Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites and the Ashdodites heard that the repair of the walls of Jerusalem went on, *and* that the breaches began to be closed, they were very angry.

[Neh. 4:8](#) All of them conspired together to come *and* fight against Jerusalem and to cause a disturbance in it.

[Neh. 4:9](#) But we prayed to our God, and because of them we set up a guard against them day and night.

- The men decided to prevent the construction by force
 - So Nehemiah prayed and then set up a rotating guard
 - Prayer and action working side by side
 - Confident of their task and God's direction, and willing to use all the means God has given them to accomplish God's work
 - Not passive, not discouraged, not letting anything stop God's work
 - So it must be with us
 - When God gives us a leader with a purpose in serving Him, we will see opposition, you can bet on it
 - And against that opposition we will pray
 - But we must also strive and continue to press forward
 - Not by taking revenge ourselves

- But by focusing on the task God has given
 - Nehemiah set up a guard, not an attack force
 - But Nehemiah took the defense a step further

[Neh. 4:16](#) From that day on, half of my servants carried on the work while half of them held the spears, the shields, the bows and the breastplates; and the captains *were* behind the whole house of Judah.

[Neh. 4:17](#) Those who were rebuilding the wall and those who carried burdens took *their* load with one hand doing the work and the other holding a weapon.

[Neh. 4:18](#) As for the builders, each *wore* his sword girded at his side as he built, while the trumpeter *stood* near me.

[Neh. 4:19](#) I said to the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people, "The work is great and extensive, and we are separated on the wall far from one another.

[Neh. 4:20](#) "At whatever place you hear the sound of the trumpet, rally to us there. Our God will fight for us."

- Nehemiah knew that the workers were too spread out to be an effective defense force against a superior army
 - But if they brought their numbers together, they could withstand the enemy's attacks
 - So they devised a plan to mass at one point on the wall anytime there was a call for help with the trumpet
 - The point was that God's people could defend themselves best when they came to one another's aid and acted to protect one another
 - If one group had failed to defend the wall and allowed the enemy to penetrate the city,
 - The entire wall would have been in jeopardy and the whole nation would have been at risk
 - Under those circumstances, it would have been foolish for anyone to say to his brothers, I'm sorry I'm too busy to help you defend your part of the wall
 - I have my own part
 - So they were ready at a moment's notice to lend a hand to one another
 - Because they were all engaged in the same work

- So clue #2 seems to be that God brought a godly leader to Israel so he could lead them into a new perspective
 - They weren't individuals serving their own interests
 - They were a part of a single family of brothers and sisters in Israel united in a shared work against a common enemy
 - And they must at all times be ready to lend a hand to defend the walls without parochialism
 - Our leaders will expect no less
 - God's people ready to share the burden and defend one another and come to each other's aid in prayer and in works of one kind or another
 - No one can be too busy to answer the call for help
 - Because if one falls to the enemy, the entire family of God is weaker as a result
- The next clue takes us to chapter 5

[Neh. 5:1](#) ¶ Now there was a great outcry of the people and of their wives against their Jewish brothers.

[Neh. 5:2](#) For there were those who said, "We, our sons and our daughters are many; therefore let us get grain that we may eat and live."

[Neh. 5:3](#) There were others who said, "We are mortgaging our fields, our vineyards and our houses that we might get grain because of the famine."

[Neh. 5:4](#) Also there were those who said, "We have borrowed money for the king's tax *on* our fields and our vineyards.

[Neh. 5:5](#) "Now our flesh is like the flesh of our brothers, our children like their children. Yet behold, we are forcing our sons and our daughters to be slaves, and some of our daughters are forced into bondage *already*, and we are helpless because our fields and vineyards belong to others."

- This is a somewhat complicated situation, but it's not surprising
 - Verse 2 mentions three groups pitted against one another in a dispute over grain during a time of limited supply
 - Verse 2 describes one large clan who is hoarding and consuming much of the available grain

- Verse 3 a second group that has been forced to mortgage their land to pay for grain since their lands aren't yielding enough
- Verse 4 describes another group who also borrowed money to pay taxes on their property
- Evidently, the effect has been that some Jews have profited at the expense of their brothers
 - And they were taking advantage of the misfortune of their brothers in the land by charging exorbitant interest (usury) on those money lent to pay for grain and taxes
 - Charging usury interest against another Jew was actually illegal under the Law of Moses
- So Nehemiah hears of the complaints and recognizes a threat from within
 - The family of God is undermining each other by treating one another unfairly
 - And taking advantage financially of one another
 - And simply not sharing their wealth and blessings with one another

[Neh. 5:6](#) ¶ Then I was very angry when I had heard their outcry and these words.

[Neh. 5:7](#) I consulted with myself and contended with the nobles and the rulers and said to them, "You are exacting usury, each from his brother!" Therefore, I held a great assembly against them.

[Neh. 5:8](#) I said to them, "We according to our ability have redeemed our Jewish brothers who were sold to the nations; now would you even sell your brothers that they may be sold to us?" Then they were silent and could not find a word *to say*.

[Neh. 5:9](#) Again I said, "The thing which you are doing is not good; should you not walk in the fear of our God because of the reproach of the nations, our enemies?"

[Neh. 5:10](#) "And likewise I, my brothers and my servants are lending them money and grain. Please, let us leave off this usury.

[Neh. 5:11](#) "Please, give back to them this very day their fields, their vineyards, their olive groves and their houses, also the hundredth *part* of the money and of the grain, the new wine and the oil that you are exacting from them."

- In our materialistic, capitalistic, self-reliant culture, any thought of sharing resources or lending without interest seems un-American
- Yet that's what Nehemiah called for

- Within the body of Christ, we should be prepared to show the highest degree of charity and self-sacrifice for the sake of our brothers and sister in the Lord
 - We never look at another's need as an opportunity to profit
 - We never seek to place new financial burdens on top of existing ones
 - We share of our wealth to comfort those in the Body of Christ who have need

[Acts 2:44](#) And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common;

[Acts 2:45](#) and they *began* selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need.

[Acts 2:46](#) Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart,

[Acts 2:47](#) praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.

- So clue #3 is how a godly leader inspires charity and brotherhood within God's family
 - Because the leader appreciates the necessity of Gods people supporting one another in supplying the basic needs of life
 - Our work in ministry is difficult
 - The enemy is untiring in his efforts to undermine that work
 - The last thing we can afford is to undermine one another in our dealings or neglects of one another
 - No brother or sister in the Lord should be left without hope of their provision and the church stands as God's instrument in the world to care for those needs
- If you were to move forward from this point in Nehemiah, you would learn a great deal more about the man and his wisdom in leading the nation
 - In chapter 6, you can read how he deals with slanderous statements made by Israel's enemies concerning him and the people
 - And how the wall was finished in a stunning 52 days

- Which utterly demoralized Israel's enemies
- In chapter 7 you can watch as Nehemiah assembles the people and brings them into the city to dwell in safety within the walls
 - And what a joyous tearful moment that must have been for God's people
 - Recognizing God's goodness and mercy to have restored them to the city in this way after so long
- And the final clue for our question to end the series is found in chapter 8

[Neh. 8:1](#) ¶ And all the people gathered as one man at the square which was in front of the Water Gate, and they asked Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses which the LORD had given to Israel.

[Neh. 8:2](#) Then Ezra the priest brought the law before the assembly of men, women and all who *could* listen with understanding, on the first day of the seventh month.

[Neh. 8:3](#) He read from it before the square which was in front of the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of men and women, those who could understand; and all the people were attentive to the book of the law.

[Neh. 8:4](#) Ezra the scribe stood at a wooden podium which they had made for the purpose. And beside him stood Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiah, Uriah, Hilkiah, and Maaseiah on his right hand; and Pedaiah, Mishael, Malchijah, Hashum, Hashbaddanah, Zechariah *and* Meshullam on his left hand.

[Neh. 8:5](#) Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people for he was standing above all the people; and when he opened it, all the people stood up.

[Neh. 8:6](#) Then Ezra blessed the LORD the great God. And all the people answered, "Amen, Amen!" while lifting up their hands; then they bowed low and worshiped the LORD with *their* faces to the ground.

[Neh. 8:7](#) Also Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, the Levites, explained the law to the people while the people *remained* in their place.

[Neh. 8:8](#) They read from the book, from the law of God, translating to give the sense so that they understood the reading.

[Neh. 8:9](#) ¶ Then Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest *and* scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, "This day is holy to the LORD your God; do not mourn or weep." For all the people were weeping when they heard the words of the law.

- What a remarkable scene
 - Could Israel of ever imagined such a scene a hundred years earlier while still in Babylon?

- Or even 75 years ago when the first group arrived?
- Or even 20 years ago as the city walls lay in ruins?
- Cannot God do more than we are even capable of imagining?

[Eph. 3:20](#) ¶ Now to Him who is able to do far more **abundantly** beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us,

- This is the God Israel serves
 - And now the pieces come together
- Nehemiah leading the people into a remarkable rebuilding of the walls
- Ezra commanding their respect and faithfulness to God's word
- And the people gathered to worship God with a heart of truth and their faces bowed to the ground
 - Weeping in joy and a recognition of their own unworthiness before a mighty and holy God
 - Oh how God restores!
- Clue #4 is the product of the work
 - A leader comes to God's people with a burden and a calling and a mission
 - But His burden wasn't for a city, it was for the people
 - And his calling wasn't to achieve a goal, but to stir hearts
 - And his mission wasn't to build a wall, but to build up a people
 - In this moment we see the true purpose of godly leadership in the restoring God's people
 - A godly leader is the one who calls, and leads, and inspires and corrects and teaches
 - And he does all these things not so that great buildings may be constructed
 - Or impressive programs will be established

- Or world famous ministries might be founded
- He does whatever he does so that God's people may be built up in the grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ
 - To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity
- For the church is the people,
 - And therefore the work of a leader within the church is to build up the people into ministers of the gospel through their very lives
- When we look at the four clues together, the true purposes of restoring godly leadership becomes apparent
 - A godly leader will draw God's people to share one another's burdens and get involved in God's work
 - A godly leader will inspire God's people to band together in fellowship and unity of the Spirit to defend one another and the faith against the enemy
 - To see a brother's failure as their own failure
 - A godly leader will remind the faithful of their responsibility to care for one another and meet each other's needs as every family should
 - Finally, a godly leader recognizes that his true work is not the work of building a wall or an empire or a legacy or a career
 - It's a calling to build up God's people