

Sunday 12th June, 2022

Service for Swansea & Charlestown Presbyterian Church

Welcome & Prayer

Welcome everyone to our service this morning. It is wonderful to be able to worship our Lord and rejoice that we are all part of God's family, for as it says in Ephesians *"You are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household."*

Let us pray. Dear Lord, we rejoice that whether we are worshipping today at home or in church, we are all able to feel your presence everywhere. We rejoice that you are all-seeing and all-knowing, and that your comfort and strength is limitless. We marvel at your might and power, that you are in control, and that you love each and every one of us.

But Lord, we know that we don't always live our lives in a way that pleases you. We know that we can be selfish, that we follow our own desires, and don't always put you first in our lives. For this Lord, we are truly sorry, and ask for your forgiveness. We ask that you turn our hearts from the evil desires of the world and help us to live holy lives with reverent fear.

And Lord, we thank you for your love for us, that you have paid the price for our disobedience with the precious blood of Jesus Christ. We thank you that because of Jesus' death and resurrection, that our relationship with you has been restored, and that we have the hope of eternal life with You.

Lord, we pray that you will continue to comfort us through these difficult times and give us the strength to deal with the challenges and obstacles that we encounter. And we pray that our lives will be full of love for others, and that through our actions we will bring You glory. We ask all of this in the name of your Son Jesus Christ. Amen.

Song – Glorious things of Thee are spoken

[Glorious things of thee are spoken - YouTube](#)

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| <p>1. Glorious things of thee are spoken, Zion, city of our God! He, whose Word cannot be broken, Formed thee for His own abode; On the Rock of Ages founded, What can shake thy sure repose? With salvation's walls surrounded, Thou mayst smile at all thy foes.</p> | <p>3. Round each habitation hov'ring, See the cloud and fire appear, For a glory and a cov'ring, Showing that the Lord is near; Thus deriving from our banner Light by night and shade by day, Safe they feed upon the manna Which He gives them when they pray.</p> |
| <p>2. See, the streams of living waters, Springing from eternal love, Well supply thy sons and daughters, And all fear of want remove: Who can faint while such a river Ever flows their thirst t' assuage? Grace which, like the Lord, the giver, Never fails from age to age.</p> | <p>4. Saviour, if of Zion's city, I through grace a member am, Let the world deride or pity, I will glory in Thy name; Fading is the worldling's pleasure, All his boasted pomp and show; Solid joys and lasting treasure None but Zion's children know.</p> |

Bible Reading – Nehemiah 3:1-21 (NIV)

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. ² The men of Jericho built the adjoining section, and Zakkur son of Imri built next to them. ³ The Fish Gate was rebuilt by the sons of Hassenaah. They laid its beams and put its doors and bolts and bars in place. ⁴ Meremoth son of Uriah, the son of Hakkoz, repaired the next section. Next to him Meshullam son of Berekiah, the son of Meshezabel, made repairs, and next to him Zadok son of Baana also made repairs. ⁵ The next section was repaired by the men of Tekoa, but their nobles would not put their shoulders to the work under their supervisors. ⁶ The Jeshanah Gate was repaired by Joiada son of Paseah and Meshullam son of Besodeiah. They laid its beams and put its doors with their bolts and bars in place. ⁷ Next to them, repairs were made by men from Gibeon and Mizpah—Melatiah of Gibeon and Jadon of Meronoth—places under the authority of the governor of Trans-Euphrates. ⁸ Uzziel son of Harhaiah, 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. ⁹ Rephaiah son of Hur, ruler of a half-district of Jerusalem, repaired the next section. ¹⁰ Adjoining this, Jedaiah son of Harumaph made repairs opposite his house, and Hattush son of Hashabneiah made repairs next to him. ¹¹ Malkijah son of Harim and Hasshub son of Pahath-Moab repaired another section and the Tower of the Ovens. ¹² Shallum son of Hallohesh, ruler of a half-district of Jerusalem, repaired the next section with the help of his daughters. ¹³ The Valley Gate was repaired by Hanun and the residents of Zanoah. They rebuilt it and put its doors with their bolts and bars in place. They also repaired a thousand cubits of the wall as far as the Dung Gate. ¹⁴ The Dung Gate was repaired by Malkijah son of Rekab, ruler of the district of Beth Hakkerem. He rebuilt it and put its doors with their bolts and bars in place. ¹⁵ The Fountain Gate was repaired by Shallun son of Kol-Hozeh, 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. ¹⁶ Beyond him, Nehemiah son of Azbuk, 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. ¹⁷ Next to him, the repairs were made by the Levites under Rehum son of Bani. Beside him, Hashabiah, ruler of half the district of Keilah, carried out repairs for his district. ¹⁸ Next to him, the repairs were made by their fellow Levites under Binnui son of Henadad, ruler of the other half-district of Keilah. ¹⁹ Next to him, Ezer son of Jeshua, ruler of Mizpah, repaired another section, from a point facing the ascent to the armoury as far as the angle of the wall. ²⁰ Next to him, Baruch son of Zabbai zealously repaired another section, from the angle to the entrance of the house of Eliashib the high priest. ²¹ Next to him, Meremoth son of Uriah, the son of Hakkoz, repaired another section, from the entrance of Eliashib's house to the end of it.

Announcements

Focus for June – Mission. We are fortunate to have four link missionaries that we prayerfully and financially support – the Webbs in Broome (with CMS), the Parsons in Japan (with CMS), the Applebys in Indochina (with Pioneers) and Josh Montzka in Melbourne (with Power to Change). We currently give each missionary about \$3,000 a year and regularly pray as individuals and as a Church for them. But we could do more. We could write regular letters to them, provide care packs for them, send books or videos to encourage them etc. If it takes a village to raise a child it also takes a Church (or two) to support a missionary. How can you help out with one of our missionaries?

Compassion Sunday. As part of our month on mission, we have invited a representative of Compassion to come and speak to us on Sunday 19th June. He will make a ten-minute presentation at Charlestown and if you are interested in child sponsorship this would be a good time to get more information.

For your diary: Pastoral Care & Dementia. What is dementia? How do you care for a loved one with dementia? What role do we play as a Church for those who are helping loved ones with dementia? Are there any good resources out there that can help me? The do and don't about visiting people with dementia. On Sunday June 26 from 3-5pm we're running a time to think about the Christian and Dementia.

COVID. Many of our people and their families continue to contract COVID. As a Church we want to support and help you through this time by providing physical support, meals and our prayers. So if you get COVID please let your home group leader or Stephen or Jon know so we can organise such help and support.

Building Renovations at Charlestown. The costing of our concept plan has taken about 4-5 weeks longer than expected (the firm that we employed to do it has had a break in and that has put everything back for them)! We still plan to have a congregational meeting as soon as we possibly can to talk through our thoughts and plans. A few weeks after that meeting, we will have a vote on whether we go ahead or not with these plans.

Browns. The Brown are currently on two weeks of annual leave. If you need any pastoral assistance, please contact Stephen on 0426 82 90 80.

Pastoral Care. Are you interested in the pastoral care of members of our Church? If so, we have a regular ZOOM meeting to discuss and pray how we can better care for our people. The next meeting will be on Sunday 19th June @ 3:30pm. The zoom details will be available next week.

Kids Spot: We finish our series in 1 Samuel this week and will look at chapters 18-31! Here we will learn that as God's future king, David, played by God's rules. He spared King Saul's life and trusted God to protect him. Jesus, as God's King of kings, always played by God's rules, even when people were killing him. Question of the week: What are examples of where we go along with our friends' ways rather than following God's ways?

Song – Is he Worthy? [Chris Tomlin - Is He Worthy? - YouTube](#)

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| <p>1. Do you feel the world is broken? (We do) Do you feel the shadows deepen? (We do) But do you know that all the dark won't Stop the light from getting through? (We do) Do you wish that you could see it all made new? (We do)</p> | <p>3. Does the Father truly love us? (He does) Does the Spirit move among us? (he does) And does Jesus, our Messiah hold forever those He loves? (He does) Does our God intend to dwell again with us? (He does)</p> |
| <p>2. Is all creation groaning? (It is) Is a new creation coming? (It is) Is the glory of the Lord to be the light within our midst? (It is) Is it good that we remind ourselves of this? (It is)</p> | <p>Chorus</p> |

Chorus: Is anyone worthy? Is anyone whole?
Is anyone able to break the seal and open the scroll?
The Lion of Judah who conquered the grave
He was David's root & the Lamb who died to ransom the slave
Is He worthy? Is He worthy?
Of all blessing and honour and glory
Is He worthy of this? He is

Pastoral Prayer Points

Psalms 17:5-6: "Hold up my goings in Your paths that my footsteps do not slip. I call upon you, for you will answer me, O God; incline your ear to me; hear my words."

"First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions..." –1 Tim 2:1-2a

New Government leaders: Pray for the new Prime Minister, Anthony Albanese, and for all who are appointed to serve as government leaders.

Ukraine: Pray for peace. Pray for protection for Ukrainians who are fighting, and for provision and safety for those who are displaced. Pray that Russia will be thwarted in their efforts to take over the country.

Churches: Pray for Australian churches to grow in size, spiritual maturity, and effectiveness in discipling believers. Pray that many more Australians will turn to Christ and find a church home to belong to.

Indigenous Ministries within the Presbyterian Church. God would continue to raise up and develop leaders for the Indigenous Church and that they would be well trained for the challenges they face. That the Word of God would remain central in the life of the Indigenous Church. That God would send His Holy Spirit and that many young Indigenous people would come to a genuine relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. That God would raise up workers for His harvest — Indigenous & Non-Indigenous. That through the gospel there would be true reconciliation between Indigenous & Non-Indigenous Australians.

Bible Reading – Nehemiah 4:1-23 (NIV)

When Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, he became angry and was greatly incensed. He ridiculed the Jews,² and in the presence of his associates and the army of Samaria, he said, “What are those feeble Jews doing? Will they restore their wall? Will they offer sacrifices? Will they finish in a day? Can they bring the stones back to life from those heaps of rubble—burned as they are?”³ Tobiah the Ammonite, who was at his side, said, “What they are building—even a fox climbing up on it would break down their wall of stones!”⁴ Hear us, our God, for we are despised. Turn their insults back on their own heads. Give them over as plunder in a land of captivity.⁵ Do not cover up their guilt or blot out their sins from your sight, for they have thrown insults in the face of the builders.⁶ So we rebuilt the wall till all of it reached half its height, for the people worked with all their heart.⁷ But when Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites and the people of Ashdod heard that the repairs to Jerusalem’s walls had gone ahead and that the gaps were being closed, they were very angry.⁸ They all plotted together to come and fight against Jerusalem and stir up trouble against it.⁹ But we prayed to our God and posted a guard day and night to meet this threat.¹⁰ Meanwhile, the people in Judah said, “The strength of the laborers is giving out, and there is so much rubble that we cannot rebuild the wall.”¹¹ Also our enemies said, “Before they know it or see us, we will be right there among them and will kill them and put an end to the work.”¹² Then the Jews who lived near them came and told us ten times over, “Wherever you turn, they will attack us.”¹³ Therefore I stationed some of the people behind the lowest points of the wall at the exposed places, posting them by families, with their swords, spears and bows.¹⁴ After I looked things over, I stood up and said to the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people, “Don’t be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your families, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your homes.”¹⁵ When our enemies heard that we were aware of their plot and that God had frustrated it, we all returned to the wall, each to our own work.¹⁶ From that day on, half of my men did the work, while the other half were equipped with spears, shields, bows and armour. The officers posted themselves behind all the people of Judah¹⁷ who were building the wall. Those who carried materials did their work with one hand and held a weapon in the other,¹⁸ and each of the builders wore his sword at his side as he worked. But the man who sounded the trumpet stayed with me.¹⁹ Then I said to the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people, “The work is extensive and spread out, and we are widely separated from each other along the wall.²⁰ Wherever you hear the sound of the trumpet, join us there. Our God will fight for us!”²¹ So we continued the work with half the men holding spears, from the first light of dawn till the stars came out.²² At that time I also said to the people, “Have every man and his helper stay inside Jerusalem at night, so they can serve us as guards by night and as workers by day.”²³ Neither I nor my brothers nor my men nor the guards with me took off our clothes; each had his weapon, even when he went for water.

Sermon – All Hands On Deck! [Charlestown Presbyterian Church - YouTube](#)

Slide 1

Sometimes you hear people talking about the 80/20 rule in churches. A number of people who have looked into these things closely and who do studies and questionnaires as to how churches operate will say that 80% of the work of giving and service and the work of the ministry in the Church gets done by 20% of the people. And the other 20% of the giving and service and ministry gets done by the remaining 80% of the members of the Church. The 80/20 rule says that the majority of the work done in the Church is done by a small minority.

Now I wonder if that is true of our Church? Is the vast majority of the work being done by a small group (8-9 @ Swansea, 40 or 50 @ Charlestown) of dedicated Christians? It is something worth pondering. But not for too long. Because a more important question to ask is am I one of the 20% doing most of the work or one of the 80% doing the rest of the work?

Now I think in some ways that is an unfair question. Because ministering in the Church is not the only place Christians can minister & besides each of us have seasons where we can be more involved in the work of the Lord than at other times in life. Family responsibilities at time need to come first. Sometimes work takes the priority, we are not all in the same season in life. So, 5 years ago were you in the 80% or the 20%? What about 10 years ago? What about 20 years ago? Yes, seasons are important but some people seem to find time no matter what season they are in and others will unfortunately never, ever find the time to prioritise the work of God's people.

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In Nehemiah 3 & 4 we see that the work that God has called his people to undertake is to build up the people of God by firstly rebuilding the walls around the city of Jerusalem. You see Nehemiah had found out in chapter 1 that the people were in great trouble and disgrace and the walls of Jerusalem had been broken down. So last week we saw that Nehemiah had journeyed from the heart of the Persian empire to this Jewish backwater in order to build a wall. Maybe 2-3 kilometres long, some 6 metres high and approx. 3 metres thick.

And chapter 3 could have been summarised by one sentence. "The people banded together and rebuilt the wall." But that is not what is written in our Bibles. Instead, we have a whole chapter of over 40 names of the people who actually built a part of that wall & we read

Slide 3

1. The Details of the Work (chapter 3)

"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."

The lead for this great project was taken by the High priest Eliashib and his fellow priests. They set a good example for everyone else to follow. And they consecrated their part of the work to God. They were not just stacking bricks they were building something for their Lord.

Slide 4

Others followed the priest's lead. ²*"The men of Jericho built the adjoining section, & Zakkur son of Imri built next to them. The Fish Gate was rebuilt by the sons of Hassenaah."* Now this must have required great teamwork and skill. Because the men of Jericho had to build in such a way as to meet both the priests on one side and the sons of Hassenaah on the other.

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Ninety years ago, this year the Sydney Harbour bridge was completed and when they built it, they started from both ends and it was joined in the middle and was only a centimetre or two out. Likewise with all

these people doing part of the work each builder had to work with their neighbour to ensure the joins was exact and strong. And that takes great teamwork.

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But not everyone was willing to put their shoulders to the wheel. ⁵ *"The next section was repaired by the men of Tekoa, but their nobles would not put their shoulders to the work under their supervisors."* For some people this sort of work was beneath them. They didn't want to get their hands dirty. Their pride got in the way. But for others it was a family affair.

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¹² *"Shallum son of Hallohesh, ruler of a half-district of Jerusalem, repaired the next section with the help of his daughters."* Shallum used girl power to get his section done. And verse 20 states that *"Baruch son of Zabbai zealously repaired another section,"* his work must have stood out from all the others. And I bet his enthusiasm for the task was contagious.

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Now not everyone did the same amount of work, Nehemiah didn't divide the length of the wall into 40 equal parts. For example, in verse 13 we read *"The Valley Gate was repaired by Hanun and the residents of Zanoah. They rebuilt it and put its doors with their bolts and bars in place. They also repaired a thousand cubits (or about 450 metres) of the wall as far as the Dung Gate."* This one group did almost a quarter of the work! Wouldn't you want those guys in your Church! And they ended at the dung gate, I bet no-one wanted to work there.

While others came back and built a second section of the wall. The men of Tekoa along with Meremoth and Meshullam completed two sections. They all went the second mile, such was their appetite for the project. And Nehemiah was smart enough to get Jedaiah & Benjamin and Azariah and some of the priests to build the wall beside their houses, that would ensure the quality of their work would stand the test of time.

This is how to build anything for the Lord. Work together. Have the leader set the standard, work tirelessly & enthusiastically. For each of these guys could have been doing something else but they prioritized the work of the Lord. When we send a team over to Vanuatu each year, we work with the locals on a project that they have chosen. And often the whole village joins together for a number of days to complete the task. And they have a lot of fun doing so. And it is part of their devotion to the Lord that they work on something that they believe will honour the Lord.

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Viggo Olsen, who helped rebuild 10,000 houses in war torn Bangladesh in the early 1970's was greatly inspired, he said, by Nehemiah 3. He writes, *"I was struck that no expert builders were listed in the 'Holy Land Brigade'. There were priests, priestly helpers, goldsmiths, perfume makers & women but no expert builders or carpenters were named. Only the nobles of Tekoa in v 5 are listed as having said, 'that's not my job description.' Now if it had been me, I'd have looked for the big, burly bruising guys, guys with muscles bulging out of their sleeveless shirts, with hard hats covering pony tails, maybe a tattoo or two. But Nehemiah he just had a bunch of folks who said, 'whatever I am and have, I am available.'" And that's all he needed!*

But notice there is no mention of Nehemiah, why didn't he build a section of the work? Well just as no person could do all the work, not everyone did the same type of work. But you can imagine that this sort of project would need a great deal of organization & administration. And we will see that Nehemiah played a crucial role when opposition struck.

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2. The details of the work and then **the difficulty of the work (Nehemiah 4:1-12)**

For if chapter 3 makes it sound like the work was easy peasy, it wasn't! And chapter 4 shows us there was opposition from both outside and inside the community of God's people. Because any work of God will be

opposed by God's enemies. *"When Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, he became angry & was greatly incensed. He ridiculed the Jews ² & in the presence of his associates and the army of Samaria, he said, "What are those feeble Jews doing? Will they restore their wall? Will they offer sacrifices? Will they finish in a day? Can they bring the stones back to life from those heaps of rubble—burned as they are?"*

So often the first port of call to stop the work of God is ridicule and abuse. What on earth are you wasting your time doing that for? And here we see the rulers of the surrounding nations belittle their qualities ("their just feeble Jews"), deride their ambition ("will they restore the wall?"), mock their optimism ("Will they offer sacrifices"), lampoon their enthusiasm ("will they finish in a day"), undermine their confidence ("can they bring the stones back to life") & magnify their problems ("those heaps of rubble -burned as they are")

Slide 11

When that doesn't work, they resort to threats. They plot against the Jews. They intimidate them with violence. They threaten the people with their troops. And you know what? These tactics normally work. None of us like our work questioned. We don't enjoy being the subject of abuse. Our resolve melts when someone bullies us, especially if they are bigger & more powerful than us. And we see in chap 4 that the people are God become discouraged.

They lose their strength. The fatigue factor begins to kick in. The initial enthusiasm begins to wear off. Just because you are doing something for the Lord doesn't mean everything will be hunky dory all the time. God's work is hard. There are plenty of frustrations. God's people can easily become burned out when we don't allow enough time for rest. At those times discouragement can cripple us.

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There's a made-up story about the devil having a garage sale. And he places all his tools of trade open for public inspection, each marked with a sale price. There they all were: hatred, envy, jealousy, lust, pride and so on. But next to this lot was a harmless looking tool. It was quite worn and was selling for a very high price. What is the name of this tool, someone asked? And why is the price so high? The devil replies "That is discouragement. It is more useful than all the others. I can pry open and get inside a person's heart very easily. And no one knows that I am the one using it on their hearts!"

As C. S. Lewis so eloquently pointed out in *Screwtape Letters* when an older demon is teaching one of his apprentices, "Have you tried discouragement because it always works?"

Questioning, insults, treats, discouragement, tiredness and then fear. The Jews say in verse 12 "Wherever we turn they will come and attack us." And there is truth in what they say. Imagine those Jews that live outside the walls of Jerusalem. Their men folk go off each day to build the walls and the rest of the family would be vulnerable, very vulnerable to attack. Fear will stop many people from doing the work they are called to do.

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Spurgeon once commented *"Before any great achievement, some measure of depression is very usual. Such was my experience when I first became a pastor in London. My success appalled me, and the thought of the career which seemed to open up, so far from elating me, cast me into the lowest depths, out of which I uttered my miserere and found no room for a gloria in excelsis."* He concludes his thoughts by saying *"This depression comes over me whenever the Lord is preparing a larger blessing for my ministry."*

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But the opposition might have Satan behind them but we have the Lord inside of us. And each day he asks us to put the armour of God, so that we can take our stand against the devil's schemes. He calls us to ¹⁴*"Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, ¹⁵and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. ¹⁶In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil*

one. ¹⁷ Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. ¹⁸ And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people."

What is within us is stronger than what is around us. And Nehemiah knows this. And so, when the strong weakens and their enthusiasm begins to wear out, Nehemiah provides crucial leadership. The faithless ridicule but the faithful pray. The faithless demean while the faithful plan. The faithless threaten while the faithful are encouraged by their godly leaders.

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3. The details, the difficulty & finally the determination of the workers (Neh 4:13-23)

What did Nehemiah do to help his people to continue to build despite the threats from outside & the disappointments and fear from within? Well, the key to all he did was **prayer**.

⁴ "Hear us, our God, for we are despised. Turn their insults back on their own heads. Give them over as plunder in a land of captivity. ⁵ Do not cover up their guilt or blot out their sins from your sight, for they have thrown insults in the face of the builders."

Now I am not sure that is a prayer that at first glance I particularly like. Shouldn't we be praying forgiveness for our enemies not judgement? Shouldn't we be speaking kindly to them not praying that they get what they deserve? Well, yes that is how Jesus teaches us to pray but the Bible also has numerous prayers like this. Where God's enemies are called to account. Where God's people pray for justice and judgment. So, before we too quickly right off this prayer, let's see if we can learn anything from it.

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For you see Nehemiah is being threatened and abused from the people around him but he doesn't return serve, insult for insult, evil for evil. Instead, Nehemiah directs his strong emotions to God. And he prays urgently. "O God help us." Straight away he goes to God for help. He cannot solve this problem. His people are too weak to survive this onslaught. The task is too big on their own. So, he asks God to fight the battle for them.

And he prays honestly. "Give them over as plunder in a land of captivity." It's warts and all. It's real. It's unfiltered. He expresses his pain. He doesn't hold back his feelings. "Do not cover up their guilt." He is passionate about what he is saying. "Lord turn their insults back to them." He has been attacked personally and his motives challenged. But he is only doing God's work. So, if they are attacking him, they are also attacking God. And no one has the right to attack God in this way. So in his prayer, he is also defending God's honour.

And he is showing his dependency on God. Before he does anything else, he is praying. Before he says anything else, he speaks to God. God must be the first port in this storm. Yes, he will go on and make practical, wise decisions but before he even thinks about this sort of a response Nehemiah will be found in prayer. And in v9, he calls all the people to pray & they do pray. ⁹ "But we prayed to our God." Just as the men of Judah worked together, now they were praying together. Brick by brick the wall was being built. Prayer by prayer their needs were being brought to their God. We put on the armour of God each step by prayer.

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But verse 9 continues, ⁹ "But we prayed to our God and **posted** a guard day and night to meet this threat." Nehemiah believes in the sovereignty of God but that doesn't mean he won't also roll up his sleeves and work hard. He posts a guard. He stations people at the lowest part of the wall. He posted officers behind all the people of Judah who were building the wall. They carried their sword in one hand & their work materials in the other.

Trust and obey. Faith and action. Sword and Trowel. Interestingly Spurgeon named his magazine, "The Sword and the Trowel" taking its title from this chapter saying that it would be a record of "combat with sin and labour for the Lord." Sometimes we think that if we pray, we need not act, for if we do something then our prayer is faithless. Or we act and forget to pray. But here Nehemiah keeps the right balance between trusting God and taking responsibility. And the right balance means we do both of those things wholeheartedly.

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When Hudson Taylor was on his way to China, he was in a sailboat and the captain of the boat came to him. They were just off the coast of Sumatra and there was no wind, and the boat was drifting towards an island, inhabited with cannibals. The captain asked Taylor to pray for wind. And Hudson Taylor says, "Well, all right. But I want you to put the sails up." And the captain said, "Well, my sailors will think I'm crazy, because there's absolutely no wind at all!" And Hudson Taylor insisted that he put the sails up. Thirty minutes later there's a knock on the door, and the captain is saying, "You can stop praying now, because we've got more wind than we know what to do with!" Nehemiah prayed, posted & then pointed.

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Nehemiah stood up in a public assembly and urged his people *"Don't be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your families, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your homes."* Their fear can be overcome if they remember the love of the Lord. Their discouragement can be reversed if they remember that God will fight for them. Their tiredness can be overcome with the strength of the Lord.

Verse 20 "Our God will fight for us!" God has brought us back to the promised land working in the hearts of kings. Surely, he will enable us to finish the work that God has called us to do in rebuilding these walls & as always Nehemiah was well prepared. They were prepared by day; they were prepared by night. Nehemiah had a trumpeter who stayed by his side the whole time so that wherever there might be a threat of an incursion into the city the trumpeter would blast his trumpet, and they would come running to the sound of that trumpet. Nehemiah unified the people of God by both his organisation and his preparation.

Slide 20

Recently I read this story about the pre-Reformation Czech reformer Jan Hus. When he was finally caught & was sentenced to die, the manner of death was that he was to be burnt at the stake. But he noticed that his cell was lit by a flaming torch. So he thrust his hand into the flame so that he might feel what it was like, because he wanted to prepare himself that he might die well. Extraordinarily that was how he prepared himself to die.

And the leadership of Nehemiah, how he prayed, posted, pointed and prepared, helped his people to persevere. So in the end the work didn't grind to a halt. The wall continued to be built. The opposition didn't stop the work, it just tested its foundations. And because they were doing the work for the Lord it succeeded.

Slide 21

Today we are not building walls around the city of Jerusalem but the book of Revelations says the goal of our salvation is to be a part of the new Jerusalem. A city with gates & walls that surround the glory of God. And on the gates are written the tribes of Israel. And the foundations to the walls have on them the names of the 12 apostles. And the nations will gather there & the gates will never be shut. And we will all enjoy the presence of the Lord.

That's the end goal. but in the meantime, we are called to work. "Go and make disciples of all nations." Jesus says that, "The Gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed to all nations and then comes the end." It's through the preaching and the teaching of the Gospel, it's through the work of discipleship and the ministry of the Gospel that God makes a place for His name to dwell. That's a big task. That's a huge task &

it demands that every Christian participate in the work of ministry. We need a wholehearted response & a prayerful response. The sword and the trowel as we plan and persevere for the sake of the gospel.

Slide 22

If we're going to raise children in the Lord, we need every parent engaged in that task. If we're going to have marriages that display the grace of God, then we need every spouse committed to the marriage. If we're going to have worship that is joyful and compelling, we need every one of us here active in worshiping and regularly engaged in worship. If we're going to support the work of mission around the world, we need every member giving to that work. And if we're going to reach our neighbourhoods and our community around us & if we're going to love our city, then we need every person, every Christian praying and serving and loving our neighbours and welcoming the strangers who are among us. Not just 20% doing the bulk of the work. Not just 80%. For it's a big job. It's a massive job in fact.

But it is our job. So, pray and strap on the sword. Is the work too great for us? Of course, it is. "But He who is in us is greater than he that is in the world" & the work will be completed. The broken-down walls and the doors burned with fire will be restored. The New Jerusalem will descend out of heaven from God as a bride adorned for her husband & it will be due to the power of God. And the perseverance of the saints. So don't get discouraged. Don't give up. The new Jerusalem awaits the children of God. It is the goal and focus of all of our lives.

Song – O Church Arise [Keith & Kristyn Getty - O Church Arise - YouTube](#)

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| <p>1. O Church Arise and put your armour on Hear the call of Christ our Captain For now the weak can say that they are strong In the strength that God has given With shield of faith and belt of truth We'll stand against the devil's lies An army bold whose battle-cry is Love Reaching out to those in darkness</p> | <p>3. Come see the cross where love & mercy meet As the Son of God is stricken Then see His foes lie crushed beneath His feet For the Conqueror has risen And as the stone is rolled away And Christ emerges from the grave This victory march continues till the day Every eye and heart shall see Him</p> |
| <p>2. Our call to war to love the captive soul But to rage against the captor And with the sword that makes the wounded whole We will fight with faith and valour When faced with trials on every side We know the outcome is secure And Christ will have the prize for which He died An inheritance of nations</p> | <p>4. So Spirit come put strength in every stride Give grace for every hurdle That we may run with faith to win the prize Of a servant good and faithful As saints of old still line the way Retelling triumphs of His grace We hear their calls and hunger for the day When with Christ we stand in glory</p> |

Closing.

"Don't be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your families, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your homes." (Nehemiah 4:14)