

**GET REAL, GO TO WORK,  
JESUS WILL STAND WITH YOU IF YOU STAND FOR HIM  
Nehemiah 4**

Chapter 3 was not covered in this brief series. It is about the repair of the gates. Each one has some typological significance, and perhaps we will take a look at them on a Wednesday night in the future.

Today I have titled the beginning of construction phase as "GET REAL." Let me explain why.

**I. WE MUST GET REAL WITH JESUS, WHICH MEANS EASY BELIEVISM AND CHURCH MEMBERSHIP THAT LOOKS LIKE THE WORLD MUST GO!**

The building of the wall meant several things:

- Religious commitment in Jerusalem was going to move back towards God's standards.
- Those who enjoyed playing both sides of the fence (Sanballat, Tobiah, Geshem) were going to have to get right or they would be excluded.
- The wall was one of exclusion for those that hated the Jews, hated their God, and disdained holiness.
- The wall meant that the whole social, religious, and economic scene would change and the "pseudo religious" and economic "players" in the city would lose their control and influence and their corrupt livelihood would be affected.

- The wall is a symbol of God's standards for His people, i.e., the Church today.

We must be careful today. In the church's desire to want to relate to and accept everybody, we can unknowingly send the wrong message. We say Jesus will accept anyone—and technically that is true. But some people can hear that and think: that's great, God accepts me just like I am. I don't have to do anything. But Jesus said: unless a man REPENTS he cannot see the kingdom of heaven! Yes, anyone can come, but they all must come through the door of repentance and faith (which involves a SURRENDER OF ONE'S WILL TO JESUS).

So, what I am saying here is that we—the church—must get real! We must raise up the wall of Biblical truth. We must lift up a bloodied Jesus on the Cross and say: He died for you, He wants you to acknowledge your sin and turn to Him in surrender.

And for us who have been in church, it is time to get real. Are we going to walk around in a semi-dead worldly stupor and just let the world go to hell in a handbasket?! Or are we going to cry out to Jesus for ourselves, for this His church, for people who need Christ (some of those here this morning)?

Are we willing to do church differently IF it means more will see Jesus through His church? Are we willing to plan the ministries of this church based on the guidance of the Holy Spirit (try some new things) and not just do things because we have always done it that way?! Are we going to do ministry

based on its GOSPEL EFFECTIVENESS? That, my friends, is raising up the wall!

Raising the walls means our personal lives are going to be challenged to GET REAL IN OUR WALK WITH JESUS. It means when we come to church, we want to see Jesus! It means when we leave church, we want to see people touched by Him during the week.

Easy believism must go—we must get real. And that means church membership must mean something. It must mean that we are the kind of people that deny self, take up our cross daily, and follow Jesus. Church is not just a “Sunday go to meeting” habit. It is an act of obedience and a desire to worship our Lord Jesus Christ.

## **II. OPPOSITION WILL ALWAYS ARISE WHEN THE CHURCH WANTS TO “GET RIGHT” AND “GET REAL”**

Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem – What do they represent?

- Those in church more for social reasons than conviction from the heart.
- Those in the church that do not want to change the nice “go along to get along” attitude in the church: i.e., keep everything non-challenging and weak; don’t ask for stuff like repentance, self-denial, and cross-centered living!
- Those in the church who have not labored in prayer for a lost person to be saved, but will get real concerned if you change something not essential to the gospel.
- Lost church members.

- They can represent church members who have just gotten off base and need to repent. But more often it is a more hardened attitude.
  - Illustration – My time in the pastorate when I had to decide whether to not do anything and “play it safe” OR recommend a re-alignment of church staff for GOSPEL REASONS alone. There was opposition—a “gut check” time. God delivered!

### **III. WHEN GOD’S PEOPLE PULL TOGETHER FOR THE GOSPEL AND ARE WILLING TO WORK, GOD’S PROTECTIVE HAND WILL BE WITH THEM**

Note there were three distinct threats they faced.

1. The opposition from Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem and the Ammonites and the Ashdodites. (vss 7-8)
2. They felt overwhelmed by the work. (see vs. 10)
3. The threat of attack. (implied in vs. 16 and directly in vs. 11)

Note that the Lord gave them some specific “how to’s” in response.

- Vs. 9 – We prayed to God and set a guard as a protection.
- Vss. 13-14 – They worked with each “clan” assigned together—prepared for battle—and they actively (personally) called on the Lord and trusted in Him.
- Vs. 15 – They “continued the work.” Note when the church experiences difficulty, the gospel mission should not be set aside. Sometimes there is a time of healing, but even that is motivated by the mission, i.e., the gospel.
- Vs. 16 – They prepared for any attack while working.

- Vs. 20 – Because their heart—their motive—was right, they trusted God’s active, supernatural hand to be with them!
- Vss. 21-22 – They came together for mutual protection.

#### **IV. WHEN WE GET HONEST WITH GOD AND RELEASE ALL TO JESUS, HE WILL TRANSFORM US INTO HARD-WORKING GOSPEL PEOPLE**

Verse 6 is the key to this whole chapter!

Why did the people have a mind to work?

- They were gripped by the vision of restoring God’s name to and through Jerusalem.
- They were convinced that this was their mission and that God would be with them in it.
- They believed that God could and would work through them. They believed that if they gave themselves wholly to the work that things would indeed be different . . . different in a good and Godly way. **THEY SAW AND UNDERSTOOD GOD’S VISION FOR HIS PEOPLE AND THE NATIONS!**

May I apply this to the church?!

1. As the church (each of us) is **GRIPPED BY JESUS CHRIST**, we will sense His Spirit and His Word compelling us for His gospel mission.
2. For most people in the church it has been a long time since they were gripped by anything except a desire to get out of the church and go eat!! People in most churches today are simply running in place doing the same old things they have been doing for years. Now there is part of that that is

good in the sense they are serving, etc. But when our service lacks the purposes of God and the passion of God it becomes dangerous to the church's health. When we have the same structures and keep them just because "that is the way we have always done it" then everybody loses out. Note here in the text that these people were doing something that most of them were not used to!

3. There was a FOCUS on the task at hand. The church is crippled today by doing so-called ministry without a gospel focus, i.e. asking how does this connect with God's purpose and mission? How effective is this and what could we do to make it more effective? That should be asked often! And that goes for everything in the church: from how the preacher preaches his sermon right down to how people in the body decide how and on what to spend God's money for Gospel ministry! And it gets down to what the church actually does in its worship, its ministries, and everything! It is both personal and corporate, how the church functions together.
4. Nehemiah led the people into this. There has got be a leader that the people respect and WILL FOLLOW! If there is no leadership, the church will squander and run in circles never getting anywhere and eventually it will die. I have seen some of the churches across this valley. I will tell you that there are more than a dozen churches in DEEP trouble and they do not even know it. The Bible is true when it says: "the people perish for the lack of a vision." Every church that has seen God work follows its God-called leader. The wonder of it all is that God would use fallible people to do His work, but He does! Awesome.

5. The VISION that the people had was not one of the past, but it was a VISION of God's preferred future for Jerusalem. They may not have understood it totally but they were preparing for the King! If any church is going to move forward they must do that . . . LOOK FORWARD. Celebrate past victories ABSOLUTELY. But take what God has done and believe Him for the future vision. But then WORK FOR THAT VISION.
6. I have to be honest with you my Riverdale friends, and I do call you MY FRIENDS today. I hope you feel the same way. This church faces some very challenging days. Some things MUST CHANGE, HEARTS MUST BE TRANSFORMED, some repentance may need to take place. BUT IF we are willing to change and let Jesus' gospel mission grip our hearts, then He WILL work. I want to see Him transform lives in and around and through us.
7. I have to tell you this: I HUNGER for the Lord Jesus to show up in and through His people and DO A SUPERNATURAL WORK! I HUNGER FOR THAT. But I know that I must OBEY HIM AND TRUST HIM AND WALK WITH HIM in order for that to happen. That means I will be totally out of my "comfort zone." Now I am asking you if you are willing to go there with me?

I could go on but it is time to take this chapter and this message and let the Lord deal with us afresh today. If you have never repented and trusted Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior, I invite you to do so today. As we sing, if you will come we can pray here or step back to a classroom and spend some time helping you to understand how to express

your heart to Christ. Jesus will forgive all of your sin and transform your heart today! Please step out and come.

I ask you all to pray this week. I look forward to being with you Saturday night. That is a very important time. I want to share with you all some of the details of what a Transitional Pastor is supposed to do. I want a place and a people I can give my heart to. I want to make a genuine difference for the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Time is short. Jesus is coming. This valley needs more healthy churches. He can work here!