

## Hurst Green

7<sup>th</sup> Jul 19

Neh 4

### Rebuild your walls

So Ezra's story moves on in Nehemiah and we have the third return. Nehemiah and the third wave.

I could have kept you here most of the afternoon and read all of the exciting things that go on in this but I am sure you would not appreciate it!!

When I first arrived here back in 06 our autumn series was on Nehemiah and rebuilding the walls. A blow by blow account of this for at that stage we needed to rebuild the spiritual walls of this church which had been beaten down by a variety of circumstances.

Those walls have been rebuilt and we now shelter within them spiritually speaking for we stand on the shoulders of the giants that have gone before us.

I see today the answer of many prayers that happened at that time for we have a God who answers prayer – You are allowed to say yes and amen to that!

This is not just me talking to you while you have some time out – we are still involved in the worship service that we came here for and you should be excited by now.

God is here – he has met with you; you have had your fire ignited again (I hope) and God is now putting his word deep in your hearts.

Like the parable of the sower you can choose what to do with it but my prayer is always that it will fall on the good soil and yield fruit but that is down to you not me!!

So the short version of Nehemiah and his walls!

And the lessons it has for us today!

#### **2 Timothy 3:16-17 (ANIV)**

<sup>16</sup> All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, <sup>17</sup> so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

So these Old Testament passages are not just history but are there for our teaching.

And we need to learn!!

This series is about loving the word because God's word should excite us and make us want to learn more from our God. Not from me from our God.

So today's title is to "REBUILD YOUR WALLS"

Remember of course that Ezra is here at this time and he will bounce back into the spotlight next week but this week it is Nehemiah's turn.

If you leave walls like everything else they will deteriorate and so we need to be constantly on our guard and keeping our walls up to strength because when the enemy comes knocking it is very difficult to defend using walls that are crumbling – better to maintain your defence!!

You have to build before you can defend and it is so much easier to build in the quiet times than in the face of an all-out attack.

So learn some things about rebuilding your walls!

But first of all you have to be **concerned**!! It sounds obvious but too many people are not concerned.

In Nehemiah 1 Nehemiah hears from Hanani about the state of the walls at Jerusalem and he is concerned.

Your concern may be about your walls or about the walls of someone you know, of this fellowship, another group or the nation. But you have to be concerned.

You have to love them enough that you want them to be strengthened.

And then you have to commit!

Another of those tough words – it can take all you have but you have to be there for the long run. If you start and bottle out then the job will not be done and a soul may be at risk and we do not want that.

But do not let that stop you – don't throw in the towel because you are scared of the price for that is cowardice and our faith is one of love not cowardice!

Committing takes courage and strength for the devil will oppose any rebuilding just as Nahemiah faced opposition. Just as the first return faced opposition.

But we are now at that point – God had had the temple rebuilt.

God had had worship re-established.

And now God was rebuilding the walls to defend all that had been done.

If you remember back in the first in this series I told you God would be doing these three things and now we find him finishing what he had started. Finishing the third of the three things.

Rebuilding the walls and doing it in only 52 days!!

God does things in his own timing and his timing can be quicker than ours!!

But our walls need rebuilding – they always need rebuilding.

Walls may seem to be strong and everlasting but they are not. Walls deteriorate and start to get weaker and in terms of defences the enemy finds new ways to attack our walls. If you look at some of the great fortresses particularly on the continent you will see that over time they have been redeveloped to face new threats and more powerful weapons that the enemy had developed.

We face the same problem. We have a sneaky enemy who looks for new ways to weaken us, to get inside our defences and cause them to fail.

And as we look at this consider always the three sets of walls that really matter to you. Your own walls are your primary concern but we also need the spiritual walls around us as a Church which we all need to keep strong and then there are the spiritual walls around our nation and we all can see that they are in bad shape at the moment.

Be wise – keep your walls well maintained not just to the old standard but keep upgrading them.

So let us see how Nehemiah went about the job.

Firstly **he began with prayer.**

And what an amazing prayer it was. It all started of course by acknowledging who God was

*Nehemiah 1:5 (ANIV)*

<sup>5</sup> *Then I said: "O LORD, God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and obey his commands,*

He prayed for himself and for his nation. He confessed the sins of his forefathers but not by blaming them but by accepting his part in that (v6 including myself). We are all part of our nation and each time we have failed to stand we have been part of weakening our nation's walls.

But he also had that great tool that is available to us today. He reminded God of his promises to the nation. We can also remind God of his promises to us – not that God needs any reminding; it is we who need to remember Gods' promises to us so that when we see them fulfilled then we will acknowledge they are God at work.

If we do not remember his promises we just put it down to God being nice rather than God being the faithful God that he is.

Then **he invited others** to join him.

A mistake we can make in our society is going it alone. Our society is a strange mix; it preaches individualism. We stand on our own and we are who we are while at the same time requiring a high level of conformity. People always struggle to fit in.

They struggle to be like everyone else as if that will solve all their problems. They want to belong or to be like the latest reality TV star. To be anything but themselves.

Is it any wonder that our young people struggle – torn between these two opposing ideals in a society that seems to want them to meet both.

It is appropriate that we have this up on the wall at the moment – why fit in when you were born to stand out.

Each of us is born to stand out – we can stand out while being part of something bigger but God sees us as individual. He sees every member of his army and he loves every member as an individual while loving his army as a fighting force.

Nehemiah knew that and so he includes chapter three.

Just as we had that long list of names in Ezra from the first return here we have a long list of families and the parts they played – the section of the walls that they rebuilt.

So here groups of people stepped up and played their part not rebuilding the walls as individuals but rebuilding the parts that they could.

Not saying the whole task was too difficult and so not starting at all but getting on with the bit in front of them and letting others get on with their part.

So that is also where we are called to be today. Rebuilding the walls here in Hurst Green while others rebuild elsewhere in the land. Together those walls will rise again.

It may take longer than 52 days – it has already taken longer than 52 days but we do not know what God has got in store for us. What do the next 52 days hold?

We do the works laid before us and we do them well and we see what God is doing in and for our land. The Church is his church and he has promised that he will build his church.

And then came the **opposition**

And we know that opposition comes because the enemy wants to frustrate our progress.

If we did not rebuild then why would he be concerned but because we are building one another up, because we are building and strengthening the body of God then we will face the opposition.

But Nehemiah did not let that stop him.

He faced their taunts and ridicule – powerful weapons in today’s society. Social media exerts such a pull and allows cowardly bullies to hide in anonymity while dragging people down. This is playing a huge part in destroying young people today even driving some to suicide.

But the people continued on with all their heart – they knew what was important and the walls reached half their height.

Then the threats became more physical and verse 6 to 22 of Chapter 4 shows how the people continued to rebuild even under this threat. Half worked and half stood guard. All had their weapons to hand. Even when they went for water they kept their weapons to hand.

This reminds me of the armour of God. We are not told to put it on when the enemy attacks but we should put it on daily. Where ever we are and whatever we are doing we have the armour of God on so that we are ready.

Opposition will come but we know from our studies in Ezra how to beat it. The enemy will have to flee from us just as he had to flee from Nehemiah.

And Nehemiah **resolved injustices**. Our society is full of them – some are the law of unintended consequences coming into play, others are more deliberate but society is full of injustice and only the Church has the answer.

If we are to love our neighbour as ourselves we cannot stand by and see these injustices. We might not be able to resolve them but we can alleviate them through our love and generosity. We are called to love mercy and justice and that needs to be in actions as well as words.

As a Church we are part of that locally in our support over the years of the children's centre and their work with those who fall through the cracks of our society and internationally with our support of the hospital in Sachibondu supporting those who their own society cannot support.

We do so much although there is always so much more to do. We focus and we make a difference.

These are the good works that God lays before you daily for you to do.

So we are at work continually rebuilding our walls – maintaining them at the highest level we can so that we will be able to face any attack and we do it together, as a family for God has put us together here to do this.

Our walls defend our centre of worship that we may worship the Lord our God in all we do.