

0 (2s):

Welcome to the Bible teaching ministry of Dr. Ron Jones. Our prayer is that God will use his word to change your life and fill your heart with hope. And now here's Ryan

1 (16s):

Build back better. Boy, where have we heard that it was the campaign slogan that Joe Biden used to run for president in 2020 political campaigns and slogans are what they are. Some are better than others. All reflect a candidate's attempt to separate himself from others who are running for the same office and oftentimes to separate himself or herself from the previous person who held that office. Slogans are what they are when I read the book of Nehemiah. And I know what God used Nehemiah to do as, as a leader and the politics involved with it centuries ago in Jerusalem.

1 (56s):

I'm thankful that Nehemiah didn't use a campaign slogan when he returned to Jerusalem in 444 BC to rebuild the wall of the holy city. However, you get the sense that build back better. Might've been a good theme or better yet building a better life. That that was my title to this book and the theme of this book long before the presidential campaign. And I kinda liked that better because building a better life captures the essence of what the Lord called Nehemiah to do at a very important time. In old Testament history, when the physical wall of Jerusalem lay in ruins, leaving those Jewish exiles who had returned vulnerable to their enemies, understand that in ancient times, the wall around the city protected the people and broken walls left the inhabitants of the city vulnerable.

1 (1m 57s):

But this is not just a history lesson. You know, the Bible is, is God's truth for everyday life. And it occurred to me that maybe like the broken dilapidated walls of the holy city, perhaps somebody is here today saying my life is in a pile of ruins and rubble. And my heart is filled with despair, like the despair that filled the exiles' hearts as they looked at their broken city. And if that's the case Nehemiah's story, which is part of God's story will inspire you to build a better life with divine help and to face your future with hope. And I trust that that is how God uses the book of Nehemiah in your life as he has in my life.

1 (2m 41s):

Let's begin by understanding who Nehemiah is and how he fits. And this book by his name fits into the ultimate road trip through the Bible. Nehemiah is a contemporary of Ezra. We, we met Ezra last week through the book of Ezra and Nehemiah served as cup bearer to King Artaxerxes of Persia. Persia is modern day Iran as cup-bearer and Nehemiah earned the King's trust by testing the Royal wine and making sure there was no poison in it before you served it to the Royal family and their guests. That was a very important position. Nehemiah was living in the Citadel of Susa, which was the capital city of the Persian empire.

1 (3m 24s):

And he was in the location of the Royal palace. When we meet Nehemiah in chapter one. And when his

brother comes to him, his brother travels all the way to the Citadel of Susa to bring Nehemiah some disturbing news about the Jewish exiles who had, had survived the exile and had already returned to

2 (3m 46s):

Jerusalem. Chapter one in verse three

1 (3m 50s):

Nehemiah's brother says the remnant there in the province who had survived. The exile is in great trouble and shame. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down and its gates are destroyed by fire. And right off the bat, as we're reading Nehemiah chapter one, Nehemiah receives this news, understand the context that he is in. And the news dislocates his heart Nehemiah was simultaneously living in the Citadel of Susa. The Persian capital day's journey from Jerusalem. He was living in Susa, but his heart was in Jerusalem.

1 (4m 30s):

And when he received the news, the Bible tells us that for days he mourned and he fasted and prayed until until one day king Artaxerxes asked him why his otherwise jolly cup bearer was so sad. You don't understand it in those days. The cup bearer to the king was a very government position, was a trusted position with the king and it was wrong for the cup bearer to ever appear anything less than happy and jolly in front of the king. And so Nehemiah was taking a huge risk by appearing sad in the King's presence, let alone by sharing with him what was on his heart about the broken wall of Jerusalem in the holy city.

1 (5m 13s):

That's why in chapter two, in verse two, it says, as Nehemiah began to share with what was on his heart Nehemiah said, then I was very much afraid. He didn't know what kind of reaction was going to come from the king, but his deep concern for the welfare of his people and the holy spirit city led him to cast aside his fears to put his trust in God and for Nehemiah to take bold action. And that's one of the things that's always attracted me to the book of Nehemiah and to his leadership. He is a man of bold, bold action as we'll see for a moment. And he shared his heart with the king and upon receiving permission from the king Nehemiah returns to Jerusalem with the plan that God in his heart to rebuild the holy city and the walls around it to restore the people.

1 (6m 3s):

This was no small task. This was a monumental task to rebuild all the wall around the holy city of Jerusalem. That wall had been laying in ruins and in rubble now for centuries ever since Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians came to Jerusalem and besieged the city and destroyed the temple. They destroyed the wall as well. That, that protective wall in the face of great opposition though, Nehemiah completed the reconstruction project in 52 days, the Bible says what an amazing accomplishment. It was a miracle of God that they had completed the project in 52 days.

1 (6m 43s):

And it was kind of project miracle that his enemies, the enemy Israel had to acknowledge. And they did. Now the revival of the people living within the walls of Jerusalem took much longer and required the commitment of Nehemiah's life and leadership. And, and the latter part of the book is all about Nehemiah, who governed the city after this. And there are so many life and leadership lessons that we learned from the book of Nehemiah. This is just one of the fabulous, fabulous books in the old Testament man, a little bit more historical perspective. Nehemiah arrived in Jerusalem in 445 BC, 12 years after Ezra returned.

2 (7m 27s):

And 90 years after

1 (7m 30s):

Bubble returned, you know, the first round of exiles, which numbered about 50,000, as we learned last time, by then, most including Zerubbabel had died in a new generation, had taken their place,

2 (7m 45s):

But something else is happening here with

1 (7m 48s):

The decree of king Artaxerxes that gave Nehemiah permission to come back to Jerusalem. Something prophetic in nature was happening. And this marks the beginning of Daniel's 70 weeks, a prophecy in the book of Daniel found in chapter nine, verses 24 to 27, which is one of the most breathtaking panoramic Bible prophecies in the text of scripture that begins with the decree of king Artaxerxes to say, to Nehemiah, go back to Jerusalem and build the wall. From that time forward, 70 weeks of prophecy, a prophetic week is seven years, 490 years of prophecy related

2 (8m 32s):

Out. The

1 (8m 35s):

First 69 weeks were fulfilled at the coming of Christ. On the day of, of Palm Sunday, we are living in the pause between the 69th and the 70th week. The 70th week is the seven year tribulation period, but Nehemiah has returned to Jerusalem, began the prophetic clock. And that clock is still ticking today, as we await the, not the rapture of the church and the return of Jesus Christ, God is always up to something more than we can imagine. Isn't he? And you got to understand that, that the whole context of Nehemiah, not just presently for their times, but prophetically as it began, the clock toward the end of the age, a big question for us.

1 (9m 17s):

So today is how can we build a better life for us and for our families? What can we learn from Nehemiah? He models for us the need for prayer planning, people and persistence, sorry for the piece. It just worked out that way, but you won't forget it, right? You'll, this'll be real memorable for you to write it down. Let's begin with, with prayer building a better life requires prayer and Nehemiah was a man of prayer. In fact, his nickname for as long as I can remember is knee-high Maya. Cause this guy is always on his knees, as it were before God just studying the prayer life of Nehemiah is, is challenging enough.

1 (10m 1s):

Nehemiah chapter one sets the tone for the priority of prayer in this book and in Nehemiah's life and leadership. In fact, nearly the entire first chapter is given to the prayer that Nehemiah prayed upon hearing the news from his brother about the condition of the exiles in Jerusalem. I jotted this down this week, read a man's prayers and you get some sense of how his heart beats and you get that sense when you read Nehemiah's prayer. Let's do that together in Nehemiah chapter one, beginning in verse four, as soon as I heard these words, these words from his brother about the conditions in Jerusalem, Nehemiah says I sat down and wept and mourned for days, and I continued fasting and praying before the God of heaven.

1 (10m 49s):

And I said, listen to this, oh Lord, God of heaven, the great and awesome God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, let your ear be attentive and your eyes open to hear the prayer of your servant. That I now pray before you day and night for the people of Israel, your servants confessing the sins of the people of Israel, which we have sinned against you. Even I, in my father's house have sinned. We have acted very corruptly against you and have not kept the commandments, the statutes and the rules that you commanded your servant. Moses. Remember the word that you commanded your servant. Moses saying, if you are faithful, I will rather unfaithful.

1 (11m 32s):

I will scatter you among the peoples. But if you return to me and keep my commandments and do them though, your outcasts are in the utter most parts of heaven from there, I will gather them and bring them to the place I have chosen to make my name dwell. There. They are your servants and your people whom you have redeemed by your great power and by your strong hand, oh Lord, let not let your heart or rather let your ear be attentive to the prayer of your servant and to the prayer of your servants, who delight to fear your name and give success to your servant today and grant him mercy in the sight of this man, what a prayer this is.

1 (12m 13s):

And then chapter one ends with Nehemiah, just jotting down in his journal. Now I was cut bearer to the king. I wish I could take the time to just unpack this prayer and just peek inside in detail into the heart of Nehemiah. But you get some sense of any person's heartbeat as you hear them pray or read their prayers. Shortly thereafter, Nehemiah found himself in the presence of the king and artisans. He's inquired about why

his cup bearer was so sad and Nehemiah stepped out in a little bit, faith there, and he listened to shared his heart and, and the king listened to his concern.

1 (12m 53s):

And the king came back and said, what is it you want? And I almost pictured Nehemiah's jaw dropping. Can you imagine the wide open door that was before Nehemiah? The king was asking me what I wanted and what I needed. And before Nehemiah charged through that open

2 (13m 13s):

Door, you know what he did

1 (13m 15s):

Come on. You can guess he prayed. This is knee-high Maya. He says in chapter two and verse four, then I prayed to the God of heaven. Now I say, excuse me, king. I got to run to my prayer closet. I'll be back in just a few minutes. Now

2 (13m 30s):

He didn't do that. The Nehemiah

1 (13m 33s):

Say, excuse me, king, while I'd get down on my knees here and pray to God.

2 (13m 35s):

No, and do that.

1 (13m 38s):

What he did was he just paused in his spirit before the next thing he said to the king and just shot up one of those quiet prayers and Nehemiah in this way, models for us, how to pray on the run. You know, as you're walking into the customer's office, you know, and you've got a big business deal you need to present, or, or you're walking into the hospital and you know, you don't have time to get down on your knee. You just fire up one of those Aero prayers. The apostle Paul said in the new Testament

2 (14m 10s):

To pray without ceasing

1 (14m 12s):

And Nehemiah long before Paul comes along, models that for us, he's a man of prayer. We're going to find out he he's a man who plans as well. And he is, he is a leader and an administrator and boy he's all over the task, but he saturates everything in prayer. There's much more in the book where we could land upon

Nehemiah's prayer life, but he models for us. How prayer demonstrates our dependence upon God, as we're building a better life, you may find yourself in ruins today. Listen, however you build a better and a better future.

1 (14m 52s):

You can't do it by yourself,

2 (14m 56s):

Maybe because you've been

1 (14m 56s):

Relying upon yourself all this time in your best wisdom, in your best plans that got to got you to where you are. Okay. Now it's time to bring it before the Lord and to follow Nehemiah's example, he, he prays regularly. Secondly, Nehemiah was also a man with a plan building. A better life, requires planning, leadership and administrative skills are quite impressive. For example, before he leaves the palace with the Royal permission that he needed to go back to Jerusalem, he possessed. I'll just say the clarity of mind to request two things from the king.

1 (15m 39s):

One was security for the long, dangerous journey from the Citadel of Susa all the way back

2 (15m 48s):

To Jerusalem.

1 (15m 49s):

And he also requested the building supplies that he needed. You want to talk about a bold request for the king, but the king opened the door, right?

2 (16m 0s):

And Nehemiah, he made the request, but

1 (16m 5s):

I'm not. Before he prayed, you know, Lord, give me faith over here, Nehemiah chapter two in verse seven, details. The story it says, I also said to him, if it pleases the king, may I have letters to the governors of trans Euphrates so that they will provide me safe conduct until I arrive in Judah. And may I have a letter to ACEF keeper of the Royal park. So he will give me timber to make beams for the gates of the Citadel by the temple and for the city wall. And for the residence, I will occupy, he even requested the building supplies to build a house for himself for the time that he was there. And because the gracious hand of my God was on me. I always love how Nehemiah gives credit, where credit is due first with the Lord.

1 (16m 49s):

He says the king granted my requests. So I went to the governors of trans Euphrates and gave them the King's letters that king had also sent army officers and cavalry with me. The king just tossed in some extra. There is isn't that the way God does it. Now, when we seek him first, he gives us everything. We need all the supplies, supplies, all of our needs, according to his riches and glory and Christ Jesus. And even then some even that, which we didn't ask or even imagine clearly Nehemiah had already been formulating a plan in his mind since his brother first briefed him on the conditions in Jerusalem.

1 (17m 29s):

And he had done some homework. He was prepared to make the request when the opportunity presented itself, but there's even more to Nehemiah as

2 (17m 39s):

Skillful abilities

1 (17m 41s):

As, as a planner and a leader and administrator Nehemiah arrived in Jerusalem, sort of under the radar. The Bible tells us in chapter two, that after three days of being in Jerusalem, he sat out at night to survey the city walls. And he took only a few trusted people with him. And even then he didn't tell them all that was in his heart. And he mounted up on his horse

2 (18m 9s):

At night, rather surreptitiously quietly behind

1 (18m 15s):

The scenes under the radar, nobody really knowing why he was there or what he was doing. And he surveyed the wall. It took him a while to get around all the, the rubble. The next day, it says that he met with the Nobles and the officials. And it was the first time he shared what God had put on his heart. Chapter two, you see the trouble we are in. He says, Jerusalem lies in ruins and its gates have been burned with fire. Come let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem and we will no longer be in disgrace. And then Nehemiah gives credit to God who had already shown him favor.

1 (18m 56s):

Now, this reminds me of the time that I came as the candidate for the lead pastor position here. Well, almost six years ago. And when I saw, saw and experienced the condition of the church and these facilities, if I had shared with the church family, what I was thinking at the time and what God had put on my heart, I probably would have scared you I'm approaching the beginning of my seventh year of ministry here in October. And I can share this, but it took some time with the staff, with elders, deacons, and eventually the church family to

say it's time to rebuild because after years of neglect in this facility, we are where we are today and what it was beautiful about the way the Lord led in the process here is we're reaching forward to what lies ahead.

1 (19m 51s):

We're we're in the process of remodeling. Construction is beginning, you know, soon, and we're we're together as one church family on this, every leader has to receive what the Lord has put on their heart, but be careful, be careful about how quickly you share what the Lord has put on your heart and to whom you share it. Nehemiah had a trusted group of friends that even wrote around the city, on the horse with him. And even then it was a trusted group of city officials before they brought it to the entire congregation of exiles. But when the time was right, everybody jumped on board with it.

1 (20m 32s):

And we'll talk about that in a moment. The old saying is true. As a leader, you must inspect what you expect. And Nehemiah took the time to do that. He inspected the ruins and he came back to city officials and just, you know, was bold enough to tell them the truth. We're no, sorry place right now. We got to rebuild. Yeah. And he wasn't afraid. He, he didn't take anything for granted either. He didn't make the decision from a distance. No, he got there. He got up close. He got dirty. He spent the night inspecting another. I'm saying that he models is this.

1 (21m 14s):

If you fail to plan, you plan to fail. You ever heard that one?

2 (21m 17s):

It is so, so true. Some Christians

1 (21m 20s):

I meet are too spiritual to plan.

2 (21m 23s):

You know what I mean? I

1 (21m 24s):

Mean, they're, they're just so other worldly and so spiritual. They pride themselves on leaving all things in God's hands while remaining, personally

2 (21m 34s):

Passive to doing what needs to be, to be done.

1 (21m 39s):



Others on the other hand are aggressive, proactive planners. Let's go, let's go. Let's go. Let's do. But they plan presumptuously. They don't take the time to pray and get the Lord's plan to get the Lord's wisdom and Nehemiah. Model's a healthy balance between the two, you know, James and James chapter four in the new Testament, he warns against presumptuous planning. He says to the business person, you say, we're going to go into this city or that city and do this and do that. He says, oh no, no, no, no, no. If the Lord wills, this will happen. You need to blanket all of your plans with Dale. Valenta the Latin phrase. If the Lord wills, James wasn't against planning, he was against planning presumptuously without the Lord.

1 (22m 24s):

Proverbs chapter 16 in verse nine, says a man plans in his heart, but the Lord orders this steps. Can I just tell you how I wish I had the time to tell you how the Lord has ordered the steps of our forward initiatives, even with COVID, which none of us could have predicted, but has reordered some steps in favor of the church family. And you always have to leave room for that. Nehemiah modeled a healthy balance between praying and planning, trusting God and taking bold, bold action. Perhaps Samuel Chadwick had Nehemiah in mind when he prayed this way, oh Lord, make us intensely spiritual, but keep us perfectly natural.

1 (23m 10s):

And thoroughly practical. That's Nehemiah intensely spiritual on his knees before God, before he ever, you know, puts a task in place. But he was perfectly natural, thoroughly practical in all that he did. And we see that unfold in so many different ways. So building a better life requires prayer. It requires planning. If you fail to plan, you plan to fail. That's true in any aspect of life. If you fail to plan financially, guess what? You will plan to fail financial. You'll run out of money at the end of your life. And you'll be dependent upon family or friends and all of that. It's true in every aspect of life.

1 (23m 52s):

Pray as a, as though it all is up to God and then put the plans in place in order, let the Lord help order those steps. Thirdly, building a better life requires people are people. Chapter three is all about the people that Nehemiah got on board. He prioritized the people who were important to the task of building a better life. He could not rebuild the wall by himself. Nehemiah knew this, but he didn't even try to do it by himself.

2 (24m 26s):

Chapter three records,

1 (24m 27s):

The many, many people who put their shoulders to the physical work, the hard physical work of rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem and many, many hands made the work go fast. They completed the project in 52 days, but it wasn't easy. Yeah, it was a difficult, difficult task. And Nehemiah organized the work brilliantly starting in the north and working counterclockwise from gate to gate again, a big wall around the ancient city. And he divided the work into roughly 40 sections and gave credit by naming the people who put their shoulder to the

task in this section.

1 (25m 11s):

And that section, he was a fabulous administrator and, and leader who not only could

2 (25m 18s):

Envision the rebuilding

1 (25m 20s):

Of the wall, but also put the implementation steps in place to get from where they were in rubble and ruins to a glorious new day with a new city protected by the wall. And he names people who reconstructed each gate, starting with Eliashib chapter three in verse one who's Eliashib. Well, he was the high priest at the time. It says that Eliashib and his fellow priests went to work rebuilding the sheep gate. Why was that important to them? Because it was through the sheep gate that all the animals came for the daily sacrifice, and they had a vested interest in that we see Nehemiah's wisdom in, in, in, in putting people in different places because he even put some people in that place that was nearest to their home to rebuild that section.

1 (26m 9s):

Why? Because they took ownership of it that way. And it started with the priests. They remind me of Jesus who came not to be served, but to serve what, what an example it was for Eliashib in his priests to roll up their robes and to get dirty and, and to build out the sheep gate that was necessary for the daily sacrifices. The diversity of work and workers on the wall is also noteworthy. This is all in chapter three. And again, a lot of names and so-and-so did this and so-and-so did that, but read it. It's, it's a, it's a powerful example of, of Nehemiah people on board with him. For example, use UCL, the Goldsmith laid bricks next to Hannah and I have the perfumer.

1 (26m 52s):

I can't imagine those two people ever hanging out together, a brick layer and a perfumer, but they did Shalom worked on the wall with his teenage daughters. It says as a father, I'd love to sit down with him and ask him how he made that happen. And when our kids were younger, we had difficulty to say, Hey, go out and do some yard work once in a while. But he got his daughters to work with him side by side. Common people worked alongside the district rulers of Jerusalem. It says, and overall, you get the sense that the people's enthusiasm for the project was contagious. Verse 20 says that a guy named Barak son of XY zealously repaired another section, there was so much excitement about this.

1 (27m 34s):

So much enthusiasm about

2 (27m 36s):

It. The phrase

1 (27m 39s):

Next to him appears repeatedly in chapter three so-and-so was next to so-and-so, who was next to so-and-so and you get this sense that the entire community came together, working side by side for the glory of God and for their common good. It was a fabulous project birthed in the heart of one man

2 (27m 60s):

Who quietly

1 (28m 1s):

Surveyed the situation and then brought the project to the officials and then eventually to the people and got the people involved. However, it should not surprise us that some were not willing to lift a finger. If you're there in chapter three, look at verse five where it says the next section was repaired by the men of Toccoa, but their Nobles would not put their shoulders to the work under their supervisors.

2 (28m 36s):

I've been around the Lord's

1 (28m 37s):

Work and sacred projects like this long enough to know there are always some people like this takers, not givers who see themselves as too entitled to join in on the project. And by the way, they're usually the ones who are the greatest critics. Have you noticed that those side liners those, I call them the takers from Toccoa people who are going to benefit from the rebuilding of the wall, but they won't lift a finger to help make it back. But boy, they're good at criticizing.

1 (29m 17s):

I remember a story about the famous evangelist, DL moody. Somebody criticized him for his evangelism methods and he thought for a moment. And he said, well, I suppose the poor way I do evangelism is better than you not doing it at all. And a leader needs to be prepared with responses like that because the critics will come and the opposition will come and you can't just let it hang there.

2 (29m 48s):

A moody didn't

1 (29m 50s):

And Nehemiah didn't as well. The takers from Tacoma would certainly benefit from the reconstruction project, but they made no personal sacrifice of time, talent, or the money that it would take to rebuild the walls. And I have a question for you today. Are you a giver or are you a taker from Tacoma? It's just, it's just

right there in the text. Great leaders understand that it takes a wide range of people to build a better life for all. And they get the right people on board and match their time and their talent to the right task. It's one for all and all for one God glorifying outcome. And I get the sense that's kind of the spirit of Atlantic shores, Baptist church, even as we're reaching forward to what lies ahead.

1 (30m 36s):

If you still find yourself on the sidelines, there's time to jump on board and to be a giver and not a taker. Finally, building a better life requires persistence. It requires prayer and planning. You got to get people on board, but it also requires persistence. I alluded a little bit earlier to the opposition that Nehemiah faced even Ezra. Last week, we learned that as he faced opposition, when he brought, I don't know, 48 or 49,000 exiles back, and they laid the foundation for the temple, they rebuilt the temple facing opposition. And I said, that was only the beginning.

1 (31m 15s):

God's work, always faces opposition. And now all these years later, Nehemiah has returned and he models persistence in the face of this, a great opposition. The first taste of opposition came to Nehemiah after he presented the letters to king Artaxerxes to the trans Euphrates governors go back to chapter two and verse 10. It says after all of that, when Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite official heard about this, they were very much disturbed that someone had come to promote the welfare of the Israelites. Can you imagine here's Nehemiah?

1 (31m 58s):

I I'm back to build a better life and future for my people, but there were some people who just weren't happy about that. And later after Nehemiah inspected the walls and address the city officials, the Bible tells us that a third vision Vandal, and that's what I call them. You got the takers from Toccoa and these three vision vandals Sanballat Tobiah. And now Geshem the Arab joined with the others to form an unholy, Trinity, that mocked Nehemiah's plans, chapter two in verse 19, what is this? You are doing? They asked, are you rebelling against the king? And they began to see doubt into the hearts of the people, oppose them at every turn.

1 (32m 42s):

When Nehemiah stood strong against the initial opposition, by responding chapter two in verse 20, he says, the God of heaven will give us success. We, his servants will start rebuilding, but as for you, you have no share in Jerusalem or any claim or historic right to it. I love how Nehemiah sorta gives a bully. What he, what he, what he needs. And that's a rhetorical punch in the mouth, you know, rhetorically. I said, right? That's words, not an actual punch, but these guys are going to dog him in the project even beyond the 52 days. And he gives it right back to them.

1 (33m 23s):

Well, these vision, vision vandals were relentless. You go from chapter two through chapter three, which is all about the people into chapter four, the opposition returns, and it grows in strength and numbers. Look at chapter four, verses seven through nine, but when 10 Sanballat Tobiah and the Arabs and the Ammonites and the people of Ashdod, wow, it's growing. Isn't it. When they heard that the repairs to Jerusalem's walls had gone ahead and that the gaps were beginning to close. They were very angry. What are they angry about? But they were very angry. Verse eight, they all plotted together to come and fight against Jerusalem and stir up trouble against it.

1 (34m 8s):

I love verse nine, but we prayed to our God. Here's another, you know, Neo Nehemiah. Didn't just pray at the beginning. Praise throughout the project here, we prayed to our God and posted a guard day and night to meet his threat. Again, Nehemiah's response was intensely spiritual, perfectly natural, thoroughly practical. He prays.

2 (34m 32s):

And then he posts the guards.

1 (34m 35s):

If all you are is intensely spiritual and well, God will handle it. You'll pray, but you'll fail to do the practical thing and hire the security team in post the guards. But even this did not sway the enemies of God Sanballat Tobiah. And Geshem continued to scheme and plot against the Jews you read on and learn that God foiled and frustrated their plans. But in the midst of all of that, Nehemiah, didn't hesitate to strengthen his defenses. Now I'm in chapter four, verses 16 and 17. From that day on listen to this half of my men did the work while the other half were equipped with Spears, shields, bows, and armor.

1 (35m 19s):

The officers posted themselves behind all the people of Judah who were building the wall. Those who carried materials, did their work with one hand and held a weapon in the other. I mean, get the picture of this. And each of the builders wore his sword at his side as he worked. But the man who sounded the trumpet with me, Nehemiah had told the people in communication was difficult with the size of the wall around the city, but he had a trumpet or next to him. And he told the people, if you hear the sound of the trumpet, they're attacking, drop what you're doing. Grab your sword, grab your weapon and fight. And the opposition never ended.

1 (35m 59s):

They rebuilt the wall in the face of great opposition in 52 days, what an incredible miracle of the Lord, because at the end of the day, the people came together and said, let us rise up and build. They were so inspired by the project that Nehemiah was leading. But this unholy Trinity continued to, to oppose them. In chapter six, we learned that they sent messengers to persuade Nehemiah just to meet with them in the plain

of Ono and Nehemiah in effect said, oh no, I ain't going to meet you in the plane. Oh no. Cause I know what you're up to.

2 (36m 39s):

Why would I leave this and go

1 (36m 42s):

Meet with you? When I know that your plan is to undermine me after four failed attempts, Sanballat sent his, his own personal aide who arrived with the same request, but with it, a threatening letter that was full of false accusations. And in chapter six and verse eight, Nehemiah replied nothing. Like what you are saying is happening. You are just making it up out of your head, another rhetorical punch in the nose. He wasn't going to take it. He wasn't going to take the spreading of lies and false accusations about them. Somehow, a rising up in rebellion against the king. That wasn't their intention at all.

1 (37m 23s):

But the enemies of Israel were spinning that yarn out there. And Nehemiah said, no,

2 (37m 29s):

Oh no, oh no, I won't

1 (37m 31s):

Meet you in the plain of Ono. And oh no. Are you going to continue? Those kinds of lies about us and about me? Well, a lot more could be said about Nehemiah's leadership. This guy, man, I love Nehemiah. We could spend weeks here learning life and leadership lessons from Nehemiah. But again, you may be sitting here today and you say, pastor, my life is in a pile of ruins and rubble. How do I build a better life for myself and my family? Well, it starts with prayer. You can't build a better life without God.

1 (38m 14s):

You've tried. You've tried with your, your own best wisdom. You've put together this plan and that plan, but it hasn't been God's plan. And maybe that's why you are where you are. It's time to start with God, because everything depends on him. Nehemiah says over and over the hand of favor was upon me. You want the favor of God, his grace upon your life. Get before him in prayer become knee-high, whatever your name is. And then plan. If you fail to plan, you plan to fail, but get God's plan. Spend enough time before him, where, where he lays upon your heart, that plan, those preferred pictures of tomorrow, and then understand you can't do it alone.

1 (39m 4s):

Look around you at the people that he's placed around you. First, that godly wisdom he's puts you in proximity to starting with this, this church. If you're a part of our church here, there are people here. Now.

Now, if you're one of those persons that just kind of pop in and pop out for an hour long service, and that's, that's all the deeper, your involvement,

2 (39m 31s):

You, you, you don't have the proximity

1 (39m 33s):

Of people. That's why we always say gather in two ways in a worship service like this and in a life group and life group brings the people that you need closer to you in proximity, because you can't build a better life as an independent of that. So look for those people and then just understand it's going to require persistence

2 (39m 58s):

For

1 (39m 59s):

Nehemiah was Sanballat Tobiah and Geshem and others. This unholy Trinity just dogging him day and night is why he remained prayerful as new Testament believers. We understand from Ephesians chapter six, we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers against the rulers of darkness of this world. Open up your eyes, child of God, the opposition, the frustration that you're facing comes from the world, the flesh, the devil, that's the unholy, Trinity, the world and the world system that is antichrist. The flesh that you can improve on. You're a new creation in Christ. You have to learn to walk by the spirit and not by the flesh and the devil himself who is neither omniscient, omnipresent, nor omnipotent.

1 (40m 46s):

He doesn't know everything. He can't be in all places at all times, and he's not all powerful, but he has one third of the fallen angels that he's highly organized. And one of them, or a few of them has you and your family in the cross hairs.

2 (41m 2s):

And the Bible reminds

1 (41m 3s):

Us that like Sanballat Tobiah and Geshem we have an adversary, the devil who prowls about like a roaring lion seeking, whom he may devour. You have to be prayerful, stick to your plan, your God birthed plan, get the right people around you who can support you, take ownership of that life, that you're building for the future and be persistent, persistent in prayer, persistent in believing what God has pointed you to that competence to keep moving toward that picture comes from prayer time alone with God. And when the opposition comes, you don't fold up like an accordion.

1 (41m 45s):

You're able to look the devil in the eye or any of that opposition in the, your eye and rhetorically, punch them in the nose and move on with the plans that God has put on your heart. That's what I learned from Nehemiah. What a fabulous old Testament book. And historically it brings us up to around 400 BC

2 (42m 9s):

We'll finish road

1 (42m 11s):

Trip, number two, Lord willing next week with the book of Esther, which we drop in historically between Zerubbabel and Ezra. There was some time between those two, about 70 or 80 years. And Esther is all about the people who remained in Babylon. Remember not all of them came and some of what was happening to them back then. But we, these, these books bring us to the end of the old Testament historical books and to about 400 BC four centuries before Messiah comes. And during that four century time, not a single word from God silence, God has said all that he's going to say and do in the old Testament.

1 (42m 57s):

And now they wait in faith. Sometimes wondering if God has forgotten them. And he hasn't, the prophecies are yes. And amen. The Davidic line is preserved through which the Messiah would come. And the Bible says in the fullness of time, God sent forth his son born of a woman born under the law. Bethlehem came after all of this Israel, his chosen people

0 (43m 30s):

Were often unfaithful, but God is faithful. Isn't it? Even in the brokenness and the rubble of your life, he's faithful to say here's a way back. Here's a way up. Here's how you build a better life. Prayer planning, people, persistence. It's all right there. Modeled for us by this great man. DMI. You've been listening to the Bible teaching ministry of Dr. Ron Jones for a complete list of resources available from Ron's ministry, visit something good radio.org.