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## NEHEMIAH 3

Series: Life Lessons from Nehemiah

[PRAYER] Lord, we're grateful for the scriptures. We recognize that they are a light to our path, a lamp to our feet. They guide us. We recognize that we can be inspired by your word, be convicted by it. So in honor of you, Lord, we open it every week and we do so trusting that you're going to share with us some special truths that we need for this week. Lord, we all come from different backgrounds this week, different challenges, but we know that you can speak to us each individually. So we ask that you'd do that now. We want our hearts to be open. So right now we just open our hearts to you and ask you to speak into our lives. We ask this in Jesus' name, amen.

We're studying the book of Nehemiah. This is a book in the Old Testament. It's a story in the Old Testament written first person. So he's kind of writing his journal out for us under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and he's telling us the story about how he was used as the leader to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. So it's a historic study, but it's also the study of the determination and the work that people did together in order to accomplish a task.

We're in Nehemiah 3 this week. I want to take you back to Nehemiah 2 just for a moment because I want to remind you of these special words that were there that we saw in chapter 2. As Nehemiah is recounting the story and recounting what's going on in his life, he says – *Because the gracious hand of God was on me, the king granted my requests.* We pondered about the gracious hand of God because I know the gracious hand of God is on each one of us. When we're following the Lord then the gracious hand of God is leading us in a particular direction. Nehemiah wanted to give credit to God about the gracious hand of God on his life. God cares about each one of us personally and His gracious hand is at work.

I was talking about this gracious hand of God with Alex this week. Alex has come from Colorado to New Jersey to start a new life. No place to live, no job, a few friends but that's it. So he comes here and we got him connected with Ethan and Victoria. So now he's living at Ethan and Victoria's home because they were looking for a renter to work with him. But he still didn't have a job, so this week he had three he was working on. The Panera job, the Dick's Sporting Goods job, the Burlington job. I said to him, "The gracious hand of God is working in your life." And he's very grateful. He worked for me for the last couple of weeks so he could earn some money just to get his first month's rent going and get himself established. Now he's got these other job opportunities. I don't know exactly what's going on today in his life, but I know the gracious hand of God is working in his life. Just like the gracious hand of God is working in your life.

It's very important for us to pause sometimes and see what God is doing. So he gives testimony to that down in verse 18 of chapter 2 as he's telling the other people the work they're going to do, he says – *I also told them about the gracious hand of God on me.*

Today as we get into Nehemiah 3, we finally get to the place where they're actually building the walls. Chapter 3 is a whole list of names of people who contributed to the rebuilding of the wall. We're going to look at that passage in a moment and we're going to see all kinds of things that they did and things about them. We're going to talk about that.

But before we do, I want to read this verse from the New Testament. This is a verse from Paul. Paul is talking about working together as the church that God has created. So we're going to draw some parallels between the work that all of these people did in the Old Testament to rebuild the wall of Jerusalem with the work that we do to extend the kingdom of God.

I'd like you to stand with me as I read this verse. Would you do that? Stand with me in honor of God's word as I read this one verse from His word from Ephesians 4.

*From him (that is God) the whole body (that is the church), joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work. I like that. Each part does its work.* The idea is that each part, we're all the supporting ligaments who know Jesus Christ and we're doing our part in order to build up this church or this kingdom that God has for Himself in our world. We're building that up in love.

You may be seated.

So I'm going to read now and we're going to go through Nehemiah 3. Let's start by looking at verse 1-3 from Nehemiah 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 men of Jericho built the adjoining section, and Zakkur son of Imri built next to them. The Fish Gate was rebuilt by the sons of Hassenaah. They laid its beams and put its doors and bolts and bars in place.*

Well as we enter into this part of the story, obviously there's going to be a lot of names here. I want you to get a picture of what's actually happening. So this is a summary slide that tells you all of the gates of Jerusalem and the names of the people under each gate who did the building around that area. So that's like a summary slide of the whole sermon. We're going to draw some applications out of that, but these are the names of all of the people.

Notice we're starting at the Sheep Gate and we're going to move to the Fish Gate. We've already talked about those two gates. We're going to go all the way around these different gates and these different people are going to rebuild.

You see the walls of Jerusalem had been torn down because the enemies had come in and invaded and taken a lot of the people captive into exile. There were others who still lived there, but they lived in this disgrace, as Nehemiah puts it. Their hearts were in disgrace because the city

itself was disgraced. They lived in this disgrace for over seventy years before the rebuilders came back.

Now Nehemiah's come back with a bunch of people and a bunch of supplies and letters from the king and so on, and they start the rebuilding. They're rebuilding a wall, but Nehemiah knows this is more than just building a physical wall that's four or five feet wide, twenty feet tall, and gates that are on iron hinges that they built. It's more than that. This is about rebuilding the people and the city. In the same way, I would suggest, we are doing a lot of rebuilding in our own lives and that God wants to do things in our hearts and lives. He wants to do the rebuilding in our lives and He uses not only our work that we do, but the lives of other people that we know and that work together with us.

Let me show you a couple more pictures just so you get the geographic idea here. These are models of Jerusalem at that time so that when the walls were rebuilt this is what they looked like. Here's another graphic model of the city being rebuilt or the walls having been rebuilt so you can see what they look like.

Now what I want to do as we go through the story is I want to draw some principles out of this that we can apply to our lives. So let's take the first principle and that is this one. We're going to see all these names over and over again. Now I don't know about you, but when I look at the genealogies or I look at these lists of people in the Bible, I often wonder why. Why are these there? I think there's a good answer for that. I think one of the practical principles that we can learn as we're building is that God is concerned about individuals. So as we go through and we're going name after name after name, and you're watching me stumble over the pronunciation or you're trying to figure out how to pronounce them, I want you to think about the fact that God cares about every one of these people. I don't know any of them. But you know when you see these people and you know what they did and you recognize them, you see that God is doing something amazing in their lives.

If you go to the Vietnam War Memorial and you see all of the names, there's a striking effect that it has on you that all of those names are there. There's something different that happens to you when you actually know someone on that wall and you go hunting for that name and you find it. You go, "Wow. That's someone that I knew."

We don't know these people, but one thing we do know is that God cares about people individually. The Bible tells us that He knows our name. He knows our name. We don't just have a number with God. He knows our name. He cares about us very specifically. I want you to know that the gracious hand of God is on you. If you haven't come to a place where you made a commitment to Jesus Christ, God is leading you in that direction, to that place at the cross where you can say, "I want Jesus Christ living in my life." The gracious hand of God is on you, leading you in that direction. If you're already a Christian, God is leading you and graciously moving you in a direction. He cares about each one of us individually. The Bible says that every one of our hairs are numbered. That's a remarkable statement to think about. It's just an illustration of how much God cares for us.

So the first principle as we read through these names, I just want to be reminded of the fact that God cares about the individuals. That's why they're listed here in the passage. Well let's go on. Pick it up in verse 4 down in the middle there.

*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.*

Do you see the word *next to*, *next to*, *next to*. We're going to see it all through these verses. It brings me to another principle that I want to acknowledge, that we work together, not just independently. There's a movement in our society, of course, to be independent. Western society is very independent, whereas you go to other societies and they're more community minded. But in our society there's this great attempt to be independent, stand on your own. That independence isn't bad or evil, but I would just suggest that there's something that takes place when we work together. There's this statement made over and over again. And next to him, and next to him was this person, next to him was that person. There's something about working together in the kingdom that does something amazing for us.

You see if you look in our bulletin you can see that our goal for today is that you would learn about worship and you'd learn about Bible study and you'd learn about prayer. So you can take those things home and do them on your own, independently, by yourself. You could have watched TV today and listened to a great sermon. You could have listened to the radio and music that's on the radio and heard a great worship experience. But there's something about coming together that does something that's remarkable. It's that together experience that we're seeing as it's *next to him* and *next to him*. As we stand together in our experience together, there's something valuable that takes place when we work together.

As we continue in the passage down at the bottom in verse 5 it says – *The next section was repaired by the men of Tekoa*. I just want to pause there and just jot *men of Tekoa* down because you're going to see them later on in verse 27 when we get there and I'll make another application about them. But notice, they're working hard. The men of Tekoa are working hard, but notice it says – *But their nobles would not put their shoulders to the work under their supervisors*. What a statement. Their nobles. Why? Why did they do the work? Why wouldn't they put their shoulder into the work. It gives the impression they were unwilling. Maybe they viewed the work as beneath them somehow. Some people don't do the work and don't receive the blessing that comes from it.

You know in our independence we recognize that God has given each of us different gifts. He's given one person the gift of administration. This is what the Bible says. He's given someone else the gift of leadership, another person the gift of comforting. So we have all of these different gifts that we have independently. But when we come together, he says in that verse that we read earlier, they're like ligaments that all work together for us. In fact all of us have the responsibility, as Jesus taught us, to be servants. There's nothing that beneath us. That if someone spills coffee we don't say, "Well I have the gift of leadership. I don't take care of coffee." Okay. There's this statement that we all chip in and we serve together. There's a servant attitude that we have that seems to have been lost by the nobles of the men of Tekoa and they missed out on the

blessing. We always want to have a servant attitude as we're going forward and not miss out on the blessing that God has for us.

Next section. Verse 6. It says – *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. 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. 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. Rephaiah son of Hur, ruler of a half-district of Jerusalem, repaired the next section. Adjoining this, Jedaiah son of Harumaph made repairs opposite his house, and Hattush son of Hashabneiah made repairs next to him.*

It's just interesting that we have mentioned the goldsmiths and the perfume-makers and the leaders and the half-district of Jerusalem, which leads me to another application I think we see in this passage is that God uses all kinds of people. Isn't it interesting? I mean it's fascinating to know what kind of people attend here and what they do.

Next week you'll hear a testimony from Dr. John. Johnson. He's going to share. He's an...I don't even know what to say. He's a geological engineer. We have engineers in this church and we have nurses and we have doctors and we have massage therapists and we've got truck drivers and we've got students. We've got all kinds of people that come together. We bring together this unity that we experience because of Jesus Christ. That we're able to come together and serve Him whole-heartedly in our lives. God uses all kinds of people. Here He's using the goldsmiths, the perfume-makers, the heads of districts. God uses all kinds of people to accomplish His work.

Let's continue on in the passage. Verse 11 – *Malkijah son of Harim and Hasshub son of Pahath-Moab repaired another section and the Tower of the Ovens. Shallum son of Hallohesh, ruler of a half-district of Jerusalem, repaired the next section with the help of his daughters.*

Well we've got to stop there. *With help of his daughters.* I love that. So just as another application I want to draw attention to and that is that God uses families. It's really special when families serve together. Whether they're serving to set up here on Sunday morning or young people are greeting or young people and their parents are serving with children and working with them, or taking things down and taking them out. When children and parents work together, good things happen.

Let me tell you what it is that happens. Today in our society there's a lot of young people who when they get to be high school age or certainly when they get to be college age they're drifting away from the faith. They end up saying something like, "I've grown out of this," or "I don't think God is real." You know why that happens? That happens a lot of times because as they're growing developmentally they have not taken their faith into the next developmental stage. So they're stuck. So they start saying, "Well I don't know if God is real for me in this stage," so they start drifting away from the Lord.

A few weeks ago we had the students from Princeton University to our home, the ones that attend here at church. André and Patrick and Ethan and Victoria were talking and giving their testimonies. These are students. Sophomore and freshmen at Princeton University and they've all decided to serve Jesus Christ with all of their hearts. All of them grew up in Christian homes, but the idea is they came to a place in their own lives where they said, "I'm going to serve the Lord with my heart. This isn't just my parents' faith. This is something that I'm embracing for myself and I'm going to live for Jesus myself." That's so encouraging.

One of the things that helps young people grasp the faith and carry it into the next stage of their development is this: Serving the Lord and watching Him work. Because when you serve the Lord and you watch Him work and you experientially see God at work in your life, you go, "Whoa, this is big. Wow, God did this? That's really interesting. God's working in that person." When you're serving you get to see God work in people's lives and you go "that is amazing." And it's very easy...well I don't know if it's easy for any of us, but it's easy then to take your faith into the next stage of your development and live like a believer and understand what it means to follow Jesus Christ in any stage of our lives. So I love it that the daughters were mentioned there in the passage.

*Verse 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. 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.*

*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.*

If I put up a map at the same time, you could see some of these places geographically that they're building, but I'm really trying to look at the applications that will help us take this to the next level in our lives.

*Beyond him, Nehemiah (this is not the same Nehemiah who wrote the book) 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. 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. Next to him, the repairs were made by their fellow Levites under Binnui son of Henadad, ruler of the other half-district of Keilah. Next to him, Ezer son of Jeshua, ruler of Mizpah, repaired another section, from a point facing the ascent to the armory as far as the angle of the wall. Next to him, Baruch (remember Baruch) son of Zabbai zealously repaired another section, from the angle to the entrance of the house of Eliashib the high priest.*

Now the word *zealously* is important because he's the only one mentioned here that did something with passion. I'm sure everybody did everything with passion. But you know there's some people that you look at and you go, "Wow. That person has passion." They kind of stood up above the rest.

*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.*

So I just want to make a statement that some people work with passion in their lives that is just so enthusiastic and inspiring to the rest of us.

I work out at the Hamilton gym, the one at the Robert Wood Johnson Gym and Fitness Center on Quaker Bridge Road. A new lady over the last several months has come in and she is the cook at the deli. I often will go to a deli in part because I'm looking for good recipes to go home and try on my own. I was looking for something healthy there.

When I got to what's healthy, she said, "Well I have chicken soup."

"I'll take it. I want the homemade chicken soup."

She says, "I made it. I made this chicken soup." Because this isn't the stuff bought in the can and pour it, but this is the real stuff she made. So I took the soup and I ate the soup there and then I went back. I said, "That was really good soup."

She said, "Why did you like it? I want to know. It was the noodles, right?" Because these are the big fat noodles. She says, "I make the noodles myself."

I said, "No, it was the big chunks of chicken. Usually when I have chicken noodle soup, there's little chunks of chicken. You have big chunks of chicken in there. I really liked that."

She says, "Well you've got to taste the bread pudding." So she had these bread pudding bars there. Now I said okay those look really good. So I decided I would take one and I ate it. And I'm looking for this. This is what I'm looking for. I said I want to know how I can make this myself. Because she put all kinds of flour and gluten and sugar and things I don't eat. But I figured I'm going to learn from her bread pudding. I'm going to make these myself.

So I go home to try to make bread pudding without the bread, but with the pudding, but with some other ingredients too to replace the bread, flours that don't have gluten in them, and so on. And I use Stevia instead of sugar to make this bread pudding. Mine did not come out like bars like she had. Mine came out like soup. So I went back and told her I just could not make it. She said, "You've got to take a whole loaf of white bread and put it in there. This white bread is what makes it work." Okay forget it. I don't think I'm going to make bread pudding. I don't think I can do that on my diet. But she is just an enthusiastic woman and I just appreciate her. So if you go there, you can greet her and tell her... She'll know who I am. I don't know if she knows my name. I'm Scott. But she knows I love her bread pudding bars.

This guy had passion when he was rebuilding the walls and I just really appreciate that.

Verse 22 as we continue. *The repairs next to him were made by the priests from the surrounding region. Beyond them, Benjamin and Hasshub made repairs in front of their house; and next to them, Azariah son of Maaseiah, the son of Ananiah, made repairs beside his house. Next to him, Binnui son of Henadad repaired another section, from Azariah's house to the angle and the corner, and Palal son of Uzai worked opposite the angle and the tower projecting from the upper palace near the court of the guard. Next to him, Pedaiah son of Parosh and the temple servants*

*living on the hill of Ophel made repairs up to a point opposite the Water Gate toward the east and the projecting tower. Next to them (and here we come, remember I told you about the men of Tekoa), the men of Tekoa repaired another section, from the great projecting tower to the wall of Ophel.*

These guys... and I made an application here. I see in the scripture some do extra work. These guys came. They did their work already. Then they come and they say, "You've got anything else for me to do? What else can I do here?" That's the men of Tekoa. So they got another task and they contributed to another part of building the wall.

The last section reads this way. *Above the Horse Gate, the priests made repairs, each in front of his own house.* Notice they're doing it right in front of their own house. We've seen that already in the passage, but I'm going to make an application for that too. It says – *Next to them, Zadok son of Immer made repairs opposite his house. Next to him, Shemaiah son of Shekaniah, the guard at the East Gate, made repairs. Next to him, Hananiah son of Shelemiah, and Hanun, the sixth son of Zalaph, repaired another section. Next to them, Meshullam son of Berekiah made repairs opposite his living quarters. Next to him, Malkijah, one of the goldsmiths, made repairs as far as the house of the temple servants and the merchants, opposite the Inspection Gate, and as far as the room above the corner; and between the room above the corner and the Sheep Gate the goldsmiths and merchants made repairs.*

That takes us through the whole chapter. This last application that I want to make has to do with this idea about in front of their houses. That some people worked right in front of their homes. Things they were interested in. Things that were important to them.

Tim, would you bring me that board? Because you heard a testimony from Joan a few weeks ago that led us into this prayer board. The whole purpose of this prayer board was to take something that was close to her home. Remember she told us this story about how she has this prayer wall at home and when they have a family gathering, they put prayer requests or prayer thanks on the wall. So this is our mobile prayer wall that Joan brought for us.

Let me just read you some of these thanks that people are experiencing in their lives. I won't read names, but you can just get the idea of things that people are going through here and how God is working.

"My dad had disowned my sister and he didn't want her in his home. After many years of prayers, he allowed her back home and embraced her. God had softened his heart."

Here's another one. "I was alive. I was sent home to die as an infant."

"Thank you for my clear CAT scan and improving blood work."

"Provided needed money to pay additional bills and a good medical report."

"When I was pregnant with my boys I began bleeding at about eight weeks. Doctors said there was nothing they could do."



“So grateful and thankful for feeling so well.”

“God helped me realize my priorities and plan out my classes.”

“I married the love of my life.”

“Thank you, God, that the U.S. was greatly spared from Hurricane Dorian.”

“For using an illness to bring us closer to God.”

I mean that’s just one panel. Joan, we’re going to need another one here. She said at some point when this one gets filled out we’ll give it to someone. You can take it home. Maybe we ought to give it to someone who’s praying right now for something in their life, like Jack who’s having surgery a week from Sunday. Maybe we ought to give this to you, Jack, next week. You can take it home and put it on your wall as you’re in the hospital for four days. We’re going to be praying for you that God’s going to bring answers to prayers.

We stand next to each other. We’re serving the Lord. We’re extending the kingdom on three levels. One is that we’re making a difference in our world and we’re sharing with other people. Two, we’re making a difference in each other’s lives as we interact together. And three, God is doing work in our own lives. In all those ways God wants to do something special.

I encourage you to be one of those people that’s doing the work, not one of those that gets credited for not putting their shoulders into the work. That work can be all kinds of things, but the idea is I’m getting involved in what God wants to do. The gracious hand of God is on you. And if He’s leading you today to a place where you can accept Him as your Lord and Savior, we want to invite you to do that. We’d love to introduce you to Jesus in a very personal way. God loves you personally. He knows your name.

Let’s stand.

[PRAYER] Heavenly Father, we come before you and we thank you again for your grace and your gracious hand on our lives. Lord, I know that right now in this moment your Holy Spirit is touching people’s hearts. You’re asking them to step out and do something for you. You’re asking them to trust you in a deeper way. So Lord, do your work in a powerful way we ask. We thank you for your intimate knowledge of us, that you forgive us, you offer salvation for us. We want to accept that into our lives and our hearts this morning and to be used by you in a powerful way. In Jesus’ name, amen.