

Resilient Rebuilders 5: Working Together When the Walls Are Down (Part 2)

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Intro

Big Idea: A true rebuilding work is a team effort, and everyone playing his or her role matters. In fact, in order for God's purposes to be worked out in our world, God's family must work together.

Jesus said it clearly when talking about the kingdom of darkness.

Mark 3:25 NASB 2020

If a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand.

Nehemiah and those who stood with him stood together powerfully and clearly against the loud and obnoxious crowd (many who were a part of God's people at least in name) who wanted to stop the work of the Lord from continuing. Their success was very much tied to their general unity, faith in the Lord, and boldness which flowed out of their faith.

A passive church isn't good for anyone. We must never forget the lessons of the German church, which could very well have stopped the events which lead to the Holocaust had more of them trusted the Lord and taken courage to stand against evil.

In those days, out of 18,000 protestant German pastors,

only 6,000 were willing to stand firmly against the actions of the Nazi's by signing the documents put forth by the Confessing Church group who refused to allow the church to come under Nazi influence. Of that 6,000, only 3,000 were willing to stand up to Hitler once the real persecution began. Many of those who stood were either killed or sent to concentration camps.

Read excerpt from A Letter to the American Church.

We are the church. We are God's salt, His preservative on culture. If we don't preserve, no one will. No one else will stand for the things of God. No one else can possibly rise to rebuild what has been destroyed by the culture warriors who would want nothing more than to tear down everything good which the Lord built through the Christian influence in the West over the past 2,000 years.

Whether or not we stand up to evil today matters both individually and corporately. Standing against evil is really the first step in rebuilding. We must say, "enough" to those pushing the destructive cultural agenda.

The church should be the most gentle, kind, gracious, considerate, and selfless people anyone may know. At the same time we must also be the most earnest, honest, and faithful to Christ which means we cannot be a people who compromise in order to withhold offense. I think it is important that we Christians do all that we can not to become the offense ourselves, but we must never withhold the offense of the gospel. It is precisely the part of the

gospel message which offends which people most need. They must know they are dead in sin if they are to repent and that will offend the sensibilities of anyone who is under Adam rather than Christ. The true preaching of the gospel is the faithful wound which hurts for a moment but awakens us to the true life we need more than anything else.

A Christian who withholds the true message of the gospel because it is hard, is a most unloving person indeed. Are we content to sit idly by and let what is happening around us happen with no resistance? Are we content to just let downed walls remain? Or will we join Christ in His work to make all things new starting now? But we, church, are the light of the world and the hope for turning the tide of the cultural rot and restoring what has been broken. Yet even among our ranks, there is much disunity. This is exactly what the enemy wants. As long as he can keep true Christians divided over minor doctrinal issues and petty differences, we will not be effective.

The keys to our success in restoring this culture are clear. They are...

1. Repentance of our sinful behavior and a clear return to Christ.
2. A dedication to prayer and seeking the empowering of the Holy Spirit.
3. Rising up together in our common unity to rebuild and restore what is broken.

We must have a unified front if we are to truly repair the broken world around us. Part of the reason why the wall went unbuilt for 150 years was that the people could not get together. God remedied much of that through the ministry of Nehemiah. **The big question for us today, is can we unify for the cause of Christ in our times and can we join Christ in His work around us in our day just as they did?**

Truth

Some observations...

I. Everyone worked together.

a. While the priests were the first to begin, all sorts of people joined in the work.

b. Effective rebuilding will require getting many different people involved.

i. Many of the community leaders, nobles, and common people of Jerusalem worked side by side.

ii. Even people from several communities surrounding Jerusalem joined in the work.

1. Seeing the walls around Jerusalem rebuilt was a matter of national pride for many and would help the entire region feel more safe and secure.

a. Jerusalem was considered by many to be the epicenter of Jewish culture even as it is today. It was the place from

which the kings from the Davidic line had ruled and it's thriving was a symbol of the Lord's ongoing presence and work in the world.

b. We must also consider that Jerusalem can be seen to metaphorically represent God's kingdom on Earth.

i. This is why Jerusalem has so often been opposed but it is also the reason why it is so loved and cherished by many.

ii. If the standing walls in Jerusalem served to give a sense of peace and confidence to the people living in that part of the world, consider also how a strong and well protected church can help bring peace and prosperity all over the world.

1. Wherever the Church is, God's kingdom is present and hope is alive.

2. We must work all the more at preserving the Church in our culture, even if all we can preserve is this little church we have right here. We must rebuild what is broken in us, aligning ourselves with Christ more fully not only for our good, but for the good of all around us and for God's glory.

II. There were dissenters (5).

a. Not all of God's people were on board with the restoration project.

i. Sometimes even leaders and nobles make unholy alliances with the rulers of this world.

1. "The fashionable part of Jerusalem was in virtual league with the enemies of God." -Lange's Commentary

b. There are always those who claim to be a part of

God's family who are actually sons of the Devil. They often seek to subvert the work of Christ in the world from within His Church.

i. Beware false teachers, false prophets, and so called "super apostles" who deny the scriptures and seek to set themselves as the authority over us rather than Christ.

1. You cannot pick up your cross while you are carrying your rainbow. The rainbow of today represents the pursuit of self while the cross represents the death of self in pursuit of Christ and His righteousness. You cannot have it both ways.

a. Nehemiah and his people put their lives on hold in order to take up the work of the Lord. That is nothing short of what Christ is calling all of us to do. He calls us to lay down our lives as we know them in order to take up our cross and with the cross we also get the resurrection life He was won for us.

b. Jesus isn't looking for half baked Christians who want a little bit of Him while retaining most of themselves. He is looking for sellouts, who are willing to sell everything they have in order to purchase the pearl of great price.

i. Matthew 12:30 NASB2020 "The one who is not with Me is against Me; and the one who does not gather with Me scatters."

ii. Matthew 16:24-25 NASB2020 "Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone wants to come after Me, he must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life

for My sake will find it."

c. The Lord would say to us today, you cannot take up your cross while you are holding onto your rainbow.

i. The cross represents kingdom like, the rainbow represents the self life. We cannot have them both at the same time. We must choose one or the other.

ii. There are those who think they can have both God and the world and they are the tares in the wheat field who become the opposition to God's people and His work from within. That is what these Tekoite nobles were and that is what many in the church today have become who refuse to put their lives down in order to take up the cross.

1. They are like Elymas the magician, attempting to use God for their own gain rather than submitting to God for His glory and the good of the world. About those like them the Lord has spoken, "but Saul, who was also known as Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, stared at him, and said, "You who are full of all deceit and fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not stop making crooked the straight ways of the Lord (Acts 13:9-10)?"

2. Christ has made it clear that it is not possible to serve both God and this present age. The two are mutually exclusive and utterly not compatible.

a. Matthew 6:24 "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon."

ii. Also beware sloths who act as if the work is not urgent and who are always trying to tone down those who are zealous for the Lord's work and His gospel message.

III. Each group worked where they were assigned.

a. **It seems that Nehemiah assigned people to generally work around their neighborhood, or their place of work, or at a unique craft which they were skilled in.**

i. *This is a good reminder for us that we can only be responsible for our part of the Lord's work.*

1. It isn't helpful for us to obsess over what others are doing in other places, that only distracts us from our part of the work.

a. I can only rebuild where I have responsibility, where I live and have influence.

2. We must be focused and committed to working right where we are, within the broken section which the Lord has assigned our church to.

IV. The Lord's presence was apparent.

a. **When was the last time you saw an entire group of people get after a task together with such unity? Rich, poor, noble, common all worked side by side. There is no doubt that the Holy Spirit was behind this.**

i. *One of the ways the world can sense God's presence is by the uncommon unity of His people regardless of our minor differences.*

1. In the world you can get cancelled in you sneeze wrong,

but in God's house there is abounding grace towards one another because of the grace we have experienced in Christ.

Gospel Application

1. Christ, our true and better High Priest has taken up the work of rebuilding and restoring this broken world.

Revelation 21:5 NASB 2020

And He who sits on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." And He said, "Write, for these words are faithful and true."

Hebrews 4:14-16 NASB 2020

Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let's hold firmly to our confession. For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things just as *we are*, yet without sin. Therefore let's approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace for help at the time of *our* need.

Hebrews 8:6 NASB 2020

But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, to the extent that He is also the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises.

2. If Christ is our High Priest, and we are a nation of priests under Him, then His work is our work.

a. God is the great High Priest who has offered up Himself

as the sacrifice to pay for the sins of the world. We are those who have been redeemed through Him and we join Him in His work to reconcile as many as possible to Him and to transform the world through bringing His kingdom to bear in every place throughout the world.

2 Corinthians 5:16–21 NASB 2020

Therefore from now on we recognize no one by the flesh; even though we have known Christ by the flesh, yet now we know *Him in this way* no longer. Therefore if anyone is in Christ, *this person is* a new creation; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. Now all *these* things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their wrongdoings against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin in our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Matthew 28:18–20 NASB 2020

And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to follow all that I commanded you;

and behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

3. It is helpful for each of us to consider which aspects of our lives are in sync with the call of Christ, and which aspects are out of sync.

Challenge

What does rebuilding around us look like? What do we see Christ doing?

John 5:19 NASB 2020

Therefore Jesus answered and was saying to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless *it is* something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in the same way.

What are the tools Christ has given us as a community? Are we stewarding what God has given us in the best possible way?

The problem in most churches is not that we lack knowledge or gifting. Of course there is always room for growth, but the American church is very blessed. What we often lack is the motivation to do God’s work in God’s way and to dedicate ourselves to working with the church God has planted us in to accomplish His purposes rather than going at it like a bunch of Lone Ranger Christians.

Christ has ordained the local church as His plan for carrying out His work. We are only maximally effective when we take on this work together.

So what is God saying to you about this? How can you position your life so that you are doing God's work in God's way with God's people most effectively?

Big Idea: A true rebuilding work is a team effort, and everyone playing his or her role matters. In fact, in order for God's purposes to be worked out in our world, God's family must work together.

Our challenge is to unify around Christ like the people in Nehemiah's day unified around him. We must rise to the work right where we are, focusing on where we have opportunity and influence first.

1. What does God want to rebuild in you and your household?
2. What does God want to rebuild in our church?
3. What does God want to rebuild in our neighborhoods through us?