



Message Transcript

Continued Building

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Pastor Jeff

Our Father in heaven, we give you all the glory, all the honor and all the praise that is rightly due to your name and your name alone. It is an honor Lord to gather as your saints, to worship your name, to sing praises to you, to seek your face, and to now get ready to hear your living and active word. Lord, we thank you for your word, because we believe as a people that every time that your word is faithfully and accurately proclaimed, that you are speaking. And so our prayer this morning, Lord, is speak for we are ready to hear.

So now for all those who have gathered and desire to hear the Lord Jesus Christ speak directly to your heart, who will believe what he tells you, and who will by faith put into practice what he shows you?, Will you agree with me very loudly this morning by saying the word amen?

Amen.

As we've been in the book of Nehemiah, we've been talking about what it looks like when God gives us a vision for where he's leading us, and either we're leading or we're part of that vision. And as we follow after the Lord and we take steps of faith, even when we see the Lord come through, and even when we see his goodness and kindness to us, and even when we see his favor on our life, we realize that when we walk in the ways of the Lord, there is increased opposition to us going the way of the Lord. There is also not only increased opposition on the outside, but on the inside, internal conflict can rise as well.

Being a believer in any generation and living completely for the Lord is challenging. It's difficult. Yet when we see the Lord do what he does, many times we begin to ask the question, "Okay, how much longer do I have to do this?" Sometimes as Christians we'll even say, "Can't wait until Jesus gets back," or, "I can't wait to meet him." But what we're usually saying when we say that is not, "I'm ready to go to heaven." What we're usually saying when we say that is, "I need some rest. I need a break. This is getting hard. Lord, help me to continue to do that."

So as we're talking about what God's vision is, we're talking about what God calls us to do and how we individually and corporately are to respond. How is it that we can continue building? How is it that we can continue to go after the Lord when it becomes difficult, when we have internal conflict, when there's increased opposition, when we're doing the things of the Lord? And if you've ever wondered, how do I endure all the way to the end? I believe God has a word for you. Even Jesus in the New Testament said, "Who sits down to build a tower without counting the cost first for how much it's going to take to build the tower?" Because if you don't have the resources and the tower doesn't get built, you're going to be ridiculed, saying that man didn't have the resources it took.

So many times we're scared to take steps of faith because when we're taking those steps, we begin to think, well how are we going to get there and how are we going to do this? And we already did this much, but how do we keep going and how do we continue to do what God wants us to do?

I want to encourage you this morning if you're looking for a word on how you

continue going with the Lord, that God has a word for you. We're going to be in Nehemiah chapter seven this morning, Nehemiah chapter seven. And as you're turning there, you'll that Nehemiah has been doing the very things of God. He's experienced God's favor. He's experienced God's blessing. He's experienced God's provision. He's put teams of people together. And as we left off last week after waiting 130 years, in just 52 days of building, the wall is complete. But God is not done with what he wants to do. So how is it that we continue building?

Now, I don't know about you, but because I preach through the word and I love the word, every word in the word is important to God, therefore it's important to us and we're going to preach every word. But how many of have you seen the Food Network? Anybody seen the Food Network? You ever see that show Chopped and it Chopped? They give these three chefs, they give them up four ingredients. They give them a pineapple and a pop tart and liver and a radish, and then they've got turn that into something special. And I watched that show. I'm like, "That's all you got to work with?"

That's how I feel about Nehemiah chapter seven. Because when you read it, if you're normal Bible reader, when you get to Nehemiah chapter seven, you probably read the first five verses and maybe the last one and you move on. But I want to tell you every word in the word of God matters. And we're going to go through it this morning to see why it is that we need to continue on with the Lord. And if we're going to continue building what the Lord wants us to build, what is it that we need to champion for God to use us individually and corporately in this generation?

The first is this, that continued building champions, the establishment, and instruction of godly leadership. If you're going to continue building for the Lord, you're going to need to champion the establishment and instruction of godly leadership. Notice this in chapter seven verse one. "Now when the wall was rebuilt," so now it's rebuilt, "And I had set up the doors and the gatekeepers and the singers and the Levites were appointed. Then I put Hanani, my brother and Hananiah, the commander of the fortress in charge of Jerusalem, for he was a faithful man and feared God more than many. Then I said to them, to those two men, 'Do not let the gates of Jerusalem be opened until the sun is hot. And while they're standing guard, let them shut and bolt the doors. Also appoint guards from the inhabitants of Jerusalem, each of his post, and each in front of his own house.'"

Now check this out. For 130 plus years we've been waiting for the wall to get rebuilt, and 52 days it's a rebuild. And now it says, now that the wall was rebuilt, you would think it would say, "I was done. And I put up my feet and I got on social media and I started watching football." No. Now that it's done, I'm going to tell you; now that the wall's built, we're just getting started for what God wants to do. If you're still breathing, God has purpose for your life beyond what you've currently done right now. It says, "When the wall was rebuilt and he had shut the doors," or, "Shut up the doors, and the gatekeepers and the singers and the Levites were appointed," which tells me this, normally the gatekeepers and the Levites, they were all in charge of the temple. And what's he using them for? He's using them all over. Why? Because primarily when it comes to the things of God, worship needs to lead out. He's using all those who

instruct them in the worship of the Lord, to be helpful around the wall for what's needed.

And then he selects two men. He selects two men. Notice who he picks. He picks Hanani, his brother, and Hananiah, who's the commander of the fortress, and puts them in charge of Jerusalem. Why? Because he was a faithful man and feared God more than many. What did he do? He feared God rather than people. He was faithful in the things of the Lord over a period of time.

When it comes to the establishment and the instruction of godly leadership for God's community, the selection of leaders is important. And the first way to find a godly leader is to look at his or her spiritual track record. Here's what Nehemiah teaches us through the spirit of God this morning; find faithful men who fear God. Find faithful men who fear God. See, the fear of man can be a snare. If you fear what other people think when you're taking steps of faith, it's always going to cause problems. It's always going to let you down. Because you're always going to hear a voice in your head saying, "Why are you doing that? How come you're doing that? You shouldn't be doing it." And if you listen to the voice of people and you try to keep people happy, you can't continue to sustain faithful steps with the Lord. So find people that have a spiritual track record of caring more about what God thinks than what the people around them think. Amen?

Why? Because God's community needs that. He needs faithful leaders that do that. Find people who have been serving faithfully, not people who talk about wanting

to be leaders. People that talk about wanting to be leaders don't even know what a leader is. Leaders are just servants on steroids. It means, are you faithful in your service? Watch what people do, let people be tested. That's why the New Testament says, when it comes to the selection of elders, "Don't be hasty in the laying on of hands." Don't put them in leadership too soon. They became a Christian last year. Don't make them an elder just yet. And sometimes we talk this way as Christians like, "Oh, if so-and-so got saved. They're so gifted, they're so great. If they got saved, they'd be such a benefit to the church." If so-and-so got saved and was born again, they would be a babe in Christ and would need to grow in the faithfulness of the Lord until they were able to be used in service to them in a greater capacity.

New believers start out as newborns. And here's the problem in our culture; most of our culture falsely believes that worldly influence and giftedness equals spiritual maturity and godly leadership. Let me just tell you this, worldly influence and giftedness does not equal, nor does it have anything to do with spiritual maturity and godly influence. Notice who Jesus picked as his 12 apostles. He didn't pick anybody that had worldly influence, and he certainly didn't pick that many gifted people. Who did he pick? He picked people that he knew would follow him all the way to the end. There were times, even in John chapter six, I think it's verse 66, where he looks at the disciples when everybody's leaving and he says, what? He doesn't say, "Don't go, I need you." He looks at them and says, "You're not going to leave too, are you? Because you can, because I don't need you." Peter says, "Where else are we going to go? You have the words of life."

What was he looking for? He was looking for spiritual maturity. He was looking for people that were going to be faithful all the way to the end, many that were going to end up giving their very lives for him. That's what he was looking for. Godliness, integrity, loyalty, faithfulness, people who would serve the Lord. You say, well, how do you find those kind of people? Time. You find them in time. What I find is that most of us as Christians handle prosperity fairly well. You get a raise, you celebrate it. "Thank you Jesus." We tell our spouses, we tell our friends, we might go buy some new things. You get engaged or you get married, you celebrate. You tell everybody. You get a new job, you tell everybody. We tend to handle prosperity okay.

But it's when trial hits, it's when turmoil hits, it's when tribulation hits, that you really begin to see what a person's made of. Trial and tribulation is the squeezing of a person to see what's truly going to come out on the inside. The only way you can prepare for a trial is today for what's about ready to come. You can't prepare for the trial when the trial's happening. When the trial's happening, it's just showing what's on the inside of you. What comes out during a trial is genuinely what's in the heart of the person going through it. So give people time, watch them go through a trial.

And then you can ask people whether it's a personal trial or a corporate trial in the church, or in your job or in school or in your neighborhood. When you go through something like that, how do they handle the trial? How do these people or how do these individuals handle something when it doesn't go their way or when they're told no? Do they respond this way? Do they complain? Do they whine? Do they argue for their own way? Do they gossip and speak with other people? Do they rally people to

their own way of thinking? If they do, you know this, they're very spiritually immature. That's how spiritually immature people respond. Why? Because spiritually immature people think trials are about them, and they're not getting their way, so they have to fix everything to make sure it goes their way.

Spiritually mature people realize when they go through a trial, that God providentially is the one that brought it so that they can grow in maturity, that they can grow in grace, they can grow in knowledge, they can grow in wisdom. So while they don't enjoy the trial, they're thanking God in the trial and they're responding differently. Here's how you know a mature saint. Do they seek the Lord? They pray? Do they read the word? Do they submit to Christ's authority? Do they cast all their burdens on Him and take all their emotions and all those things that Jesus, you got to take this. Do they trust God for the best outcomes? Do they believe that God's providential, that God's sovereign, that he's working it all out?

When you're spiritually mature, here's what you say when I go through a trial. You say, "God, you get to determine the outcome. You get to determine where this goes. This is not a situation I would've wanted to be in. I didn't choose this. You chose it for me, but I thank you that you think I'm mature enough to handle it. Help me make sure that in the trial I'm listening to you and I'm being obedient to you and I'm honoring you and I'm loving you and I'm serving you, and I'm treating the people around me the way you'd want me to treat them." That's how you know who spiritual leaders are. When you find people like that, that don't get their way, and yet they're saying, "It doesn't matter what my way is, Lord." Because the Lord says, "Your ways are not my

ways. Your thoughts are not my thoughts. My thoughts and my ways are way higher than your thoughts and your ways."

If God only did the things we want God to do, our life would look very, very different. There's so many times we wouldn't choose the way it's going. And so we beg God to change our circumstances when God is sometimes saying, "This is the one I had for you. This is what's going to mature you. This is what makes you a better servant of me." Now think about it saints, those of you who are mature believers; isn't it true that sometimes the most awful situations you've been through, the ones you would never choose, the ones when you went through them that you sought the Lord you prayed, you submitted to his authority, you endured through it, isn't that what built you the most? Isn't that what matured you the most? Isn't that the one you look back on your life and said, "Thank God I had to go through that. Man, I don't ever want to go through something like that again. But it matured me."

That's the kind of leaders you're looking for. And that's why when it comes time, when the wall's built and they're getting ready to continue what God has for them, he started looking for faithful men who feared God rather than the people.

Another way to ask is how long has this person consistently pursued the Lord? How have the people around this person that's been discipled by this person pursued the Lord? How mature is their sphere of influence when they're speaking into other people? How mature is their wisdom and leadership in the Lord? The book of James says, "You tell me about your faith. I will show you my faith by what I do." Faith without

works is dead. Find people who have consistently exercised faith.

Now, why do we need godly leaders? Why do we need godly leaders in God's community? Because God chooses godly leaders in his community to provide instruction. He's given them instruction, the wall's built, and in verse three, he gives them instruction. "Do not let the gates of Jerusalem be open until the sun is hot. And while they are standing guard, let them shut and bolt the doors. Also appoint guards from the inhabitants of Jerusalem, each at his own posts and each in front of his own house." Hey, only open the doors at certain times. Guard it when you do. Guard the doors, guard your homes. Protect. Why? Because anytime you're going to walk with the Lord, you need to be in protection mode; because every time you walk with the Lord, the enemy wants to destroy what you're doing. So be on the alert. Be on the alert, be sober minded. Why? Because when you take steps of faith, the enemy takes notice and tries to destroy what you're doing.

This is why the Apostle Paul pled with the Ephesian elders in Acts chapter 20, because he knew that they were called to protect the house of God. In Acts chapter 20, starting in verse 29, he says, "I know that after my departure, savage wolves will come in among you not sparing the flock. And from among your own selves, men will arise speaking perverse things to draw the disciples after them." What was the Apostles main concern? It wasn't outside the church. Where was it? Inside. What was God saying? We need godly men to bring instruction inside the church. Why? Because there will always be those inside the community of God that will try to rise up and draw people away from God and draw people after themselves. So be careful, but make

sure you understand when it comes to being part of a community of God, which today is the church, make sure you champion the establishment and instruction of Godly leadership. It's important.

Nehemiah knew that. Jesus knew that the apostles knew that. And God's telling us today, when you're part of a Christian community, look for and champion the establishment and instruction of Godly leadership.

Number two is this; when it comes to continued building, when it comes to going after the things of God, you need to champion the fulfillment of God's vision for his covenant children. You need to champion the fulfillment, not just what God said he could do. You need to champion the fulfillment of it, the fulfillment of God's vision for his covenant children. Notice verse four, it says, "Now the city was large and spacious. They built this wall. Inside the wall. There's this large and spacious city in Jerusalem, but the people in it were few and the houses were not built. So they built this wall, but there's very few people living there, and the reason they can't live there is there's no houses built yet. So all they've done is build a wall to protect the city, which currently doesn't exist. Then my God put into my heart to assemble the nobles, the officials, and the people to be enrolled by genealogies. Then I found the book of the genealogy of those who came up first, in which I found the following record."

So notice this; as Nehemiah says, "Then my God put it into my heart." Now the Bible tells you, don't follow your heart. The Bible says the heart is wicked above all things, and who can understand it? What does it mean here when it says, God, put it in his heart? What do we know about Nehemiah? All the way back in Nehemiah one, what

is he doing? He's a prayer. He's praying. When you seek God for what God wants, oftentimes God puts things on your heart for what God wants. That's what he does. Nehemiah is not just saying, "Well, I feel like we should do this." Nehemiah has a track record of faithfully seeking the Lord in prayer. And so when he says, "God put on my heart," he's saying, I've been seeking the Lord and here's how he's led me. And we know the Lord's led him to do that, because what he's going to do is he's going to go through the genealogy of those who have been faithful, who have been full Jews, who now are coming back to the city, who have been in captivity for a long, long time.

This is so important, that you would follow after the Lord even after you continue to build. Why? Because God told Nehemiah to go back and build. But notice this, Nehemiah's calling was never just to rebuild the wall. If you ask people out in society, ask Christians, "What's the book of Nehemiah about?" "Building the wall. It's about building the wall." That's part of it. But notice this; in Nehemiah chapter one, verse three, when he starts learning about what was going on in Jerusalem, Nehemiah writes, "They said to me, 'The remnant there in the province who had survived the captivity are in great distress and reproach, and the wall of Jerusalem is broken down and its gates are burned with fire.'" So the walls are broken down, the gates are burned with fire. But that's not why he's going back. He's going back because the people are in great distress and reproach.

Notice this, Nehemiah did not go back to rebuild the wall. He went back to remove the reproach. Nehemiah did not go back to build a structure, Nehemiah went

back to rebuild God's people. A building can accommodate some of the things God wants to do, but the building isn't the only thing. Nehemiah is building the wall for the purpose of what? God's people to be the fulfillment of all that God wants. Just because they built the wall in 52 days, it doesn't mean people looked on and said, "Okay, you're still a reproach, but you got a nice wall." He built the wall so they could protect the city so that he could build the people so that the nations would look on and see that the Jews, the nation of Israel, was God's chosen people. That's why they built the wall.

So Nehemiah is not done because the wall got built. That was just 52 days. That started the process of what Nehemiah was trying to do, which all along was what? To remove the reproach of Israel. To make God's people look good. What's God's plan today? God's plan today for his church is to grow his people so that God looks good. That's why he built his church. It's not about a building, it's not about where you meet. It's not how many people come it. God can be faithful to smaller churches. God can be faithful to bigger churches. It's about those who are there who are glorifying the God of the universe so that when people look on, they say the God of the universe is alive in that place.

And this is why it's important. Because it's pretty easy when you start taking steps with the Lord where you say things like this, "We're doing okay, we're doing good. We're off to a good start." That's fine. But is that the fulfillment of the vision? No. It's the start. Just because Nehemiah's established the wall doesn't mean the vision's been fulfilled. The Jews have become their reproach to all the other nations. The wall

was just the start of what God wanted to do. Nehemiah prayed. God continued to lead him. See, God wanted to build a nation, not a wall. What's [inaudible 00:21:19] about today? God is trying to build his church. He's not looking to build buildings. Buildings can facilitate what God's doing, but he's not looking for a "successful church" or more people. What's he looking for? He's looking for the fulfillment of the great commission. To do what? Go and make disciples. Where? Of all nations. Baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit; and teaching them to obey all I have commanded you. And hey, I'll be with you always to the end of the age.

What's the purpose of the church? The fulfillment of that. That people in every tribe, tongue, and nation would hear the gospel, and those who respond to the gospel would've a place where they can grow to the fullness of all the God wants them to be so that they too can be set on mission to go out into the world. The goal is not that you "come to church," the goal is that you glorify God in the church, are built up by the church, so that you can go out and advance the Kingdom in the world. Amen? And that's what Nehemiah was trying to get his people to see. That's what he was doing.

So Nehemiah wants to gather God's people. Why is he going to look to this genealogy? Because he wants God's covenant children. He wants Jews. He doesn't want to just populate the city. He wants to populate the city with God's covenant people. Translation; the church, by definition are the called out ones. The called out ones are those who have repented of their sins and believe in Jesus and are following after him. The church by definition is Christian. The church is for Christians. We gather as Christians to glorify the Lord. That's the purpose. It's not about getting more people

to come. It's not about getting everybody who hates Jesus to walk through the doors. It's getting people that love Jesus to gather, to seek Jesus, to glorify Jesus, to stimulate our heart more for Jesus, so we'll live our mission for Jesus one more week. That's the purpose of the church.

And oh, how we have it backwards. We think we need to try every gimmick, every thing, every nuanced way just to get people to come. I don't want just anybody to come. I want more Christians. Well, how are we going to get more Christians? By going out and sharing the gospel and seeing them converted so we can bring more people in.

So he goes looking to history. It's important that we understand that, because some churches have made the wrong decision. When a church makes a decision that its purpose is to entertain the goats rather than shepherd the sheep, all hell breaks loose. Christians begin to ask silly questions like this, "Is it wrong for me to want to be fed?" Is it wrong for you to want to eat? Of course you're supposed to be fed. That's the purpose of the church. Jesus told Peter three different times, "Feed my sheep, tend my lambs. Feed my sheep." It doesn't take a rocket scientist to know you need to be fed. And God's appointed pastors and teachers in the body of Christ to feed a sheep. If you're not eating, you're starving. And the Christian church as a whole in North America is starving because so few people want to open up the word of God and just proclaim it.

See, today I'm here preaching the word for the saints to hear the voice of the

Lord. Now, if you're here and you recognize while hearing the voice of the Lord and you examine yourself and you realize I'm not in the faith, then repent and follow Jesus so that you can. But my first and foremost messages for those that love Jesus. I mean the church exists as an outpost for the gathering of saints and for the purpose of glorifying His name so that we're built up so we can live on mission. It's not gathering so that goats come in and give us good opinions about what they think the church should be. Amen. And this is what Christ wants for us.

The Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish. Church by definition is believers. If you're a believer, that's why we're gathering here. Because one day we're going to gather with men and women and boys and girls from every tribe, tongue, and nation to do what? To glorify God and enjoy them forever. And until that time, that's what we're doing here. For the purpose of doing what? So that when we leave the gathering and we disperse out, now what are we doing? We're so filled with the love and passion of God, we can take the gospel out to those who don't know Him. And we can proclaim the gospel and we can love the unlovable and we can pray for those who persecute us, in the belief that our God is alive and will lead other people to himself. And then we invite them in to come worship with us.

Isn't it true that when you're going through a hard time as a believer, there's something about gathering with other saints, and singing praise to His name, and hearing His word, and it refreshes you and encourages you and you say, "I can do it one more week. I can make it one more day. I can make it through the afternoon because I was at church today." That's the purpose, is to build one another up in the

body so that we can be sent forth on mission. And Nehemiah wants to make sure that he's not just bringing people in to populate the city, but he's bringing the right people in that are covenant children of God, so that God can dwell among those people.

And when saints gather, those who call on the name of the Lord, it doesn't matter where we gather. When saints gather, the presence of God is there. Now, whether you're in this building in Englewood, whether you're in Colorado Springs, whether you're watching online, whether you're in Westminster, there's nothing magical about our building. It facilitates ministry. It's helpful. Most of us would prefer to be indoors when it's minus 20. Most of us prefer to have a comfortable place to sit. I mean it facilitates ministry. But when the church leaves the building, there's no presence that's here that's really, really special. Nothing's special about the building. There's something special about the image bearers of God who have been born again, who desire to gather together for His glory. That's where the manifest presence and power of Jesus are. Amen. And Nehemiah understood that.

So he's going to go back to this genealogy. He's going to go back to this genealogy in verses six and following, and he's going to tell us that point number three is that continued building will champion the belief that the history of faithfulness matters to the Lord. If you're going to continue to grow with the Lord, you need to understand that a belief that a history of faithfulness to the Lord matters. It matters, a long stretch of time.

Now, we're going to read through this because this is the word of God. I promise you I will not pronounce every name correctly. I've even listened to an audio Bible a

few different times this week, and even some of the audio Bible spokesmen don't pronounce all the names correctly. But we're going to go through this because I want you to hear the word of the Lord for about three or four minutes as we spell this out and see what God has to say, because this is the genealogy that Nehemiah looked at him that he came up with to see the history of faithfulness to the Lord. So take a deep breath and let's dive in.

In verse six, "These are the people of the province who came up from the captivity of the exiles, whom Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon had carried away, and who had returned to Jerusalem and Judah, each to his own city. Who came was [inaudible 00:28:38], Yeshua, Nehemiah, Azariah, Ramiah, Nahamani, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mephibosheth, Bigvai, Nahum, Bini." Now listen, why is this a big deal? Think about this. These are children that have grown up in a foreign culture. All they know about Jerusalem, all they know about the surrounding area of Judah, is what they heard from their mom and dad or their grandma and grandpa. They've never been there, they've never seen it. They've heard how good it was and they know that they're in captivity because they disobey the Lord.

They've been told the Lord's good, we haven't been good. The Lord warned us over and over again to follow him. We didn't follow him. The reason we're living under King Nebuchadnezzar, the reason things are so difficult for us, the reason that our lives are so difficult and we're on this foreign soil has everything to do with us. If we can ever make it back, God promises to bless us and He promises in His word, He's going

to bring us back. So some day it's coming. Now, these are the people that have been listening to that for years that when they get the opportunity to go back, what do they do? They go back.

Now that may not like a big deal, but if you're used to living somewhere for a period of time and that's where you shop and those are your friends and that's where you go to work, even if it's not so good, it's kind of like being in a fishbowl. You don't know what it's like to even be wet. So when it comes to going back and doing the things of God, there could have been every opportunity to say, you know what? It's not great, but it's not bad. I don't know if I want to go start all over again. And yet what do you see? You see faithful Jews going back and doing what the Lord wants. Let's read about them.

It says right before verse eight, "The number of the men of the people of Israel, the sons of Perosh, 2,172; the sons of Shephatiah, 372; the sons of Arah, 652; the sons of Pahath-moab, the sons of Jeshua and Joab, 2,818; the sons of Elam, 1,254; the sons of Bani, 648; the sons of Bebai, 628; the sons of Azgad, 2,322; the sons of Adonikam, 667; the sons of Bigvai, 2,067; the sons of Adin, 655; the sons of Ater of Hezekiah, 98; the sons of Hashum, 328; the sons of Bezai, 324; the sons of Hariph, 112; the sons of Gibbar, 95; the men of Bethlehem and Netophah, 188; the men of Anathoth, 128; the men of Beth Azmaveth, 42; the men of Kiriath, Jearim, Kephirah and Beeroth, 743; the men of Ramah and Geba, 621; the men of Mikdash, 122; the men of Bethel and Ai, 123; the men of the other Nebo, 52; the sons of the other Elam, 1,254; the sons of Harem, 320; the men of Jericho, 345; the sons of Lad, Hadid, and

Ono, 721; the sons of Senaah, 3,930.

How are we doing so far? We doing good? We're going to talk about why this is in the scripture in just a second, because now we're getting to the priest. Notice what it says. The priest, the son of Jedaiah of the house of Jeshua, 973; the sons of Emir, 1,052; the Sons of Pashhur, 1,247; the sons of Harim, 1,017. Here come the Levites. The Levites, the son of Jeshua and Kadmiel, and the sons of Hodaviah, 74. Now the Singers; the Singers, the son of Asaph, 148. The Gatekeepers, the sons of Shallum, the sons of Ater, and the sons of Talmon, the sons of Akkub, the sons of Hatita, the sons of Shobai, 138.

Now we have the temple servants. The temple servants, the son of Ziha, the son of Hasupha, the sons of Tabbaoth, the sons of Keros, the sons of Siaha, the sons of Padon, the sons of Lebanah, the sons of Hagabah, the sons of Shalmal, the sons of Hanan, the sons of Giddel, the sons of Gahar, the sons of Reaiah, the sons of Rezin, the sons of Nekoda, the sons of Gazzam, the sons of Uzza, the sons of Paseah, the sons of Besai, the sons of Meunim, the sons of Nephusim, the sons of Bakbuk. Finally I can pronounce one, Bakbuk.

All right, sons of Bakbuk, the sons of Hakupha, the sons of Harhur, the sons of Bazluth, the sons of Mehida, the sons of Harsha, the sons of Barkos, the sons of Sisera, the sons of Temah, the sons of Neziaha, the sons of Hatipha.

Now let's keep going, here we go. The sons of Solomon's servants; the sons of Sotai, the sons of Hassophereth, the sons of Peruda, the sons of Jaala, the sons of

Darkon, the sons of Giddel, the sons of Shephatiah, the sons of Hattil, the sons of Pokereth-Hazzebaim, the sons of Ami; all the temple servants and the sons of Solomon's servants were 392. Now... Thank you.

Now let me tell you why I read that. Here's why I read it. Because every single name matters to God. Now I get that those names to us don't mean a whole lot. And that when we're doing Bible study reading and we come to Nehemiah seven, we glance at it and like, "Okay, I get it." But if you take the time to read it, you realize every name matters to God. You know what that tells me? Your name matters to God. Isaiah 43 says, "Fear not for I have redeemed you. I have called you by name. You are mine. I know your name."

Now think about what it would've been like for Israel at the time to hear this read. If you were there, you'd want to know about your family. And not only would you want to hear about your family, you would want to know did they count everybody in my family, as everybody included, that's why there was 316, there was 745. There were 2,172. Why? Because every name matters, because every person matters. Now you think about this like, "Man, why is that a big deal to me?" Because if you've repented and believe your name's been written in the Lamb's book of life, and I can tell you you'll wait for a long, long time to hear your name called will you not? I mean, when I get to heaven, I don't care if it takes forever and I don't even care if Jesus can pronounce the last name, Schwarzentraub, I'm in. And maybe I'll even learn how to pronounce it when I get there.

Every single name matters. Your name matters. You were created in the image

of God, and God knows you by name. And even if you never repent and believe in Him, you matter to God. Amen. That cool? Every name matters.

Yesterday I was at Saturday prayer and I was picking up one of these cards, I had several cards I was praying for. And on one of the cards, it didn't say who it was from, it didn't say what the prayer request was; there were just 17 names written on the card. And I took a picture of the card and I prayed for every name. I didn't know one of the 17 people. But as I was praying, I said, "God, you know every single person I'm praying for by name. And not only do you know their name, you know every need that they have, and you know what they need." And I was interceding. I interceded for all 17 names, asking the Lord to reach down with a touch of His Holy Spirit, to let them experience the fullness of Jesus. Why? Because I know that every name matters to God.

I don't need to know every request. My God knows every request. I'm mouthing, "God, you know this person? You know her? You know him?" "I know him. I know exactly what I need to do. Thanks for praying. I got this." Every name matters.

Let me give you a second one. Every ministry matters. Every ministry matters. Did you notice we had sons, we had priests, we had Levites, we had temple servants. You had people in the book of Nehemiah that worked on the wall, designed the wall, carried supplies, established worship, protected the wall, built the wall, encouraged people in the wall. Every single ministry matters. You know what that tells me? In the way that God gifted you and in the way that you serve Him, it matters. It matters. If

you think about the people that have the greatest impact in your life, you never think about their title. You always think about the way in which they helped you, and you always call them by name. It's your baseball coach when you were in little league, it was your teacher when you were younger, it was your mom or it was your dad. It's never somebody off in the distance. Maybe they've been of help to you in some way, but it's always the people up close and personal that have ministered to you that make a difference. Every ministry mattered in Jerusalem.

Can I tell you something else? Every ministry in the church matters too. If it's your first time here, the parking lot crew matters. Amen. If you've never been here before, signage matters. People that welcome you at the door matter, ushers matter. Worship team matters. Preaching matters. Serving our kids matters. Encouraging people to walk through the door matters. And we could go on and on and on and on. Everything that you do unto the Lord matters. There's nothing too small. And by the way, it's not about what other people notice about what you're doing, it's that God sees that it matters. Because so often the things that have mattered in your life, nobody else saw except you. Which means this, because God knows your name and because God's gifted you, here's what I would encourage you, serve him with all faithfulness wherever he wants. Not so that other people notice, but so that you're faithful because your gift and your contribution matters. Amen?

Everybody's contribution matters. And it doesn't matter how big or how small. And here's what I find as I read through the New Testament and as I listen to church history, some of the most faithful people were never known on this world. I mean in

Hebrews 11 were like, "Oh, look at the Hall of Faith, the great Hall of Faith. It's Moses. It's Abraham." Yeah, but what about the people at the end that the world was not worthy of, that traveled around in goatskins, that were sawed in two, that were martyred for the sake of the name that nobody ever knew, that were thrown on a trash heap, all because they love Jesus. And Jesus is like, "No, they're faithful too." And there's going to be some people that we meet in heaven, they're going to be so close to the glory of God that we're so unknown down here. Don't fight for your worldly influence. Fight for God using you to influence him. Amen. Your ministry matters. Every name matters. Every ministry matters.

Let me just say this other thing too, this is important to say. Faithful men matter. Yes, every name that's been mentioned here is male. Why? Because faithful men matter. If a culture's going to turn, if God's going to be lifted up, it's faithful men that matter, faithful men that fear God, that matter. And why do you have all these other numbers around it? You have all these other numbers around it because it represents all the families that they're representing. Because faithful men are not about themselves, and fearful men of God are not about themselves. They're about elevating everybody else around them. Faithful men are about elevating their wives and their sons and their daughters. Faithful men are about elevating the church. Faithful men are about lowering themselves so that others can be elevated. That's what we need in our culture, is faithful men. Because when you don't have faithful men that fear God, you have all the mess that you see in our culture. Faithful men matter.

And why do I say that? Because we usually don't have a woman problem. I used

to travel and be an itinerant speaker and in every church, 60 to 70% are women and they're godly and they're faithful and they're doing their thing, and they're all waiting for, "Where are the godly men that can lead this thing?" And we have a lot of them here. But men rise up; not because you're better, rise up because that's what God called you to do from the time of the garden until now, is you be faithful with the word and you model what Jesus wants. That's what Nehemiah is doing. He's looking back at the track record of faithful men who fear the Lord who can populate the city. Every name matters, every ministry matters, and faithful men matter.

If you get this, then you really move on to the final point I want to make, is that continued building, if we're going to continue to walk with the Lord, it champions the righteousness and generosity towards the Lord. It champions the righteousness and generosity for the Lord.

Let me just say this real quick too. When it comes to the faithfulness in history, think about this. Think about the ones that we read about in the Bible, Old and New Testament saints. We stand on the shoulders of giants, don't we? We're not the first generation in the history of the church. We're not the first generation of covenant children. Thousands of years, people have been walking with the Lord trying to do it the Lord's way. Anything that we're doing, we're thankful to God for those who have gone before us that we read about. We're thankful for the apostles and the prophets who the Holy Spirit used to pin his word. That's why we're here today. We're faithful for the 70 million plus martyrs who have been martyred since the time of Christ. We're grateful for those who have faithfully served the church for decades. We're faithful for

all those that we've ever read about in church history, that have done it God's way.

We're also thankful for those that we know personally. Some of you are here today because of your mom and dad. Some of you are here today because of a grandma and grandpa. Some of you're here today because of a faithful friend, an uncle, an aunt, somebody that prayed you into the kingdom. And we're thankful for those that we know that have been responsible for why we're here. And then there's those others, those anonymous saints that will never ever know on this side of heaven that when we get to heaven, we're going to realize how God wove a tapestry to use their lives to impact us, and we're going to say thanks for being faithful to the Lord. And if the Lord carries and we're faithful here, there's people we're going to touch that we won't even know until they get to heaven. We're faithful for that history, amen.

And if we are, then we can move on to this fourth point, that the righteousness and generosity towards the Lord matter. I we're going to continue building champions, it's the righteousness and generosity towards the Lord. Notice how he continues in verse 61, he says, "These were they that came up from Thelma and Balharshah, Cherub, Adan and Emir, but they could not show their father's houses or their descendants, whether they were of Israel, the sons of Deliah, the sons of Tobiah, the sons of Nakota, 642. Of the priests, the sons of Hobiah, the sons of Hakas, the sons of Barzillai who took a wife of the daughters of Barzillai, the Gileadite, and was named after them. These searched among their ancestral registration, but it could not be located. Therefore, they were considered what? Unclean and excluded from the

priesthood.

What was Nehemiah saying? If you're not pure before the Lord, if you're not right before the Lord, you can't serve as a priest before the Lord. Why? Because that's who God calls. God calls those who are pure in heart before him. God calls those that he wants. And I'll just say this, in this generation, I proclaim the Lord to the best of my ability. I try to be faithful in the word. I've told you many times, if there's something in the word you see and say, "Pastor Jeff got that wrong," that's a possibility, then you believe the word of the Lord because there's nothing wrong with the word of the Lord. But it terrifies me to think that as a teacher I'll be judged twice as harshly because as I teach, I'm putting little bits in your mouth to lead you in a direction. And I pray to God that He'd have mercy on me, that I lead you towards Him.

But it scares the living tar out of me, those that take the pulpit, that don't open the word, that haven't been called, that stand up in front of people saying, "Thus say the Lord," when they don't even open the word and all they do is tell stories. Lord have mercy on them. Lord, save them. We have too many churches with unsaved and unqualified men in the pulpit that are leading God's sheep away. And it breaks my heart, because I know how powerful and terrifying our God is. I'm scared to death trying to do it, knowing that I'm called. And it terrifies me when somebody stands there and closes the word because here's what they're saying. "Jesus, shut the heck up. I'm way more important than you. I'll tell these people what they need. I'm trying to make friends with them, and I don't give a rat's behind about you." Scares me. Pray for them.

And I praise God that God is raising up faithful men in this generation to take

over more and more pulpits in our country, and more and more pulpits around the world. I'm meeting some of these young guys that are coming up that are faithfully proclaiming the word of God. Because proclaiming the word of God matters. Amen. Purity matters. Blessed are the pure in heart for they will see God. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart. Man looks at the outward. "Oh, this guy's is a good speaker." God doesn't give a rip about that. God's looking at the heart. God's looking at the heart. Purity matters.

Number two, obedience matters. Notice this. The Governor said to them that they should not eat from the most holy things until a priest arose with the urim and thummim. The urim and thummim was a garment that went over the top. It was a way that the priest wore the garment, said, "You're not qualified to do it God's way. You need to be obedient to God. You can only do it God's way. We're not going to bend the rules. We're not going to break the rules. We're not going to undermine our integrity so that you feel good about what you're doing. We're going to honor the Lord in all things. Be obedient."

And then notice this. Be generous. Notice how this section ends, verse 66, "The whole assembly together was 42,360, besides their male and female servants of whom there were 7,337, and they had 245 male and female singers. Their horses were 736; their mules, 245; their camels, 435; their donkeys, 6,720. Now think about this. God cares about all the animals. Why? Because he created them all. I mean, you think he could group them all into one category and said, "And there were some animals and here was the number." Yet he groups them individually. He knows the

difference between dogs and horses and cats and camels and donkeys and everything else.

But notice what happens here. Some from among the heads of father's households gave to the work the governor gave to the treasury 1000 gold drachmas, 50 basins, 530 priests garments. Some of the heads of father's households gave into the treasury of the work 20,000 gold drachmas and 2200 silver minas. That which the rest of the people gave was 20,000 gold drachmas and 2000 silver minas and 67 priest garments. Now, the priests and the Levites, the gatekeepers and the singers, some of the people, the temple servants in all Israel, lived in the city. So the cities are now being populated. And when the seventh month came, the sons of Israel were in their cities. So how were they moved? They're moved by generosity.

Now, let me just tell you something; purity, obedience and generosity are an act of worship. You can't do those on your own. You can't make yourself pure, you cannot make yourself obedient, and you cannot make yourself generous, and legalism doesn't help. Be generous. Don't look at bad stuff. Be pure, live pure, be obedient. Doesn't do anything. These are motivations of those who have truly been in love with Jesus. These are the responses of those who would say, "Because of all Christ has done for me, I want to be pure before him. Because of all that Christ has done for me, I want to be obedient to Him. Because of all that Christ has done for me, I want to be generous to Him. And I can never give back to him even a speck of all that he's given to me." All of these things.

If you're in church like, "I hate church. They're always make me do stuff." No, the church isn't making you do anything. The church is proclaiming the glory of God for those who love him so that you know how to respond. If generosity is a chore and obedience is a chore, and purity is a chore, examine yourself to make sure you're in the faith. Because if it's, "I have to be obedient, I have to do this," you don't know Jesus. Because if you know the one who left heaven to come to earth as the God man who died for you and was buried and rose from the dead and gave his life so eternally, you who were dead could live forever. What more could you do? It's a privilege that God lets me grow in purity. It's a privilege that God lets me grow in obedience. It's a privilege that God lets me grow in generosity. It's not I have to, it's I get to. I want to. I want to get better at all those things. And that's how we continue to grow in the Lord. That's how we continue to grow the Lord.

And one day, one day we will stand, for those of us who believe, with men and women, boys and girls, from every tribe, tongue, and nation. One day that's going to happen. And it will begin on that day and it will go for all eternity. And it will be the most glorious celebration of all. And when we long for that, what we're longing for is rest. Don't you look forward to the day that walking with the Lord doesn't cost you anything? Don't you look forward to the day that walking with the Lord is easy? Don't you look forward to the day that you're perfectly complete in Him? Don't you look forward to the day that you don't have any sin and neither does any other brother or sister in Christ, and all you do is get along in bliss? Don't you look forward to the day that we can just worship Him? Don't you yearn for the day where we experience the beauty and

passion and the utopia of Christ's kingdom? Don't you yearn for that day?

I yearn for that day. But until that day comes, we don't rest here. We rest in the Lord here, and we continue fulfilling everything he put in our hearts. So that when we meet him, guess what we hear? "Well done, good and faithful servant. You mattered. Your ministry mattered, and you mattered to me." That's who we serve. This should not be a message of, "You better keep building." This should not be a message of, "Legalistically." No, no, no. This is a message of, "Look at all Christ did for us. Look at how He's positioned us as a church. Look for how He's using us, how can we grow more in Him, and how can we long for that day when we'll step foot into the kingdom of heaven? In that day where He'll wipe every tear from your eye, you'll be perfectly healthy. You'll have everything you need, and you'll have no more troubles. You'll have no more sorrows. You'll have no more anything. That day is a blink. It's a vapor away. And until that time, let's keep building him. Amen. Amen.

Would you stand with me? Father in heaven, we give you all the glory, honor and praise for who you are. And Lord, sometimes we get weary and we need to persevere. But Lord, what keeps our focus is we fix our eyes on you, the author and perfecter of our faith. We yearn for the day we see you face to face. Come Lord Jesus, quickly. And until you do, find us faithful men and faithful women who serve you with all that we have. We give you all the praise, all the glory, and all the honor, in Jesus' name. Amen and amen. Can we give God praise for his word today?

