

Broken and Restored

An Exposition of Nehemiah

3 Then Eliashib the high priest arose with his brothers the priests and built the Sheep Gate; they consecrated it and hung its doors. They consecrated the wall to the Tower of the Hundred *and* the the Tower of Hananel^a. ² Next to him the men of Jericho built, and next to them Zaccur the son of Imri built^b.

³ Now the sons of Hassenaah built the Fish Gate; they laid its beams and hung its doors with its bolts and bars. ⁴ Next to them Meremoth the son of Uriah the son of Hakkoz made repairs. And next to him Meshullam the son of Berechiah the son of Meshezabel made repairs. And next to him Zadok the son of Baana *also* made repairs. ⁵ Moreover, next to him the Tekoites made repairs, but their nobles did not support the work of their masters^c.

⁶ Joiada the son of Paseah and Meshullam the son of Besodeiah repaired the Old Gate; they laid its beams and hung its doors with its bolts and its bars. ⁷ Next to them Melatiah the Gibeonite and Jadon the Meronothite, the men of Gibeon and of Mizpah, also made repairs for the official seat of the governor *of the province* beyond the River^d. ⁸ Next to him Uzziel the son of Harhaiah

^a **3:1 Then Eliashib the high priest arose with his brothers the priests and built the Sheep Gate; they consecrated it and hung its doors. They consecrated the wall to the Tower of the Hundred *and* the Tower of Hananel.** Just as Nehemiah had circled the walls counterclockwise, the description of the repairs follows a similar route.

It is noteworthy that the Sheep Gate was “consecrated.” The word means *to set apart* or *to consider holy*. No other gates on the wall are described this way. This portion of the wall served a holy purpose in Jerusalem. Through it came all the sacrifices that foreshadowed the once for all sacrifice of God the Son. Here are some other places the word “consecrated” is used in the Hebrew Scriptures (**emphasis** added):

Then God blessed the seventh day and **sanctified** it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made. Genesis 2:3

Sanctify to Me every firstborn, the first offspring of every womb among the sons of Israel, both of man and beast; it belongs to Me. Exodus 13:2

Moses said to the LORD, “The people cannot come up to Mount Sinai, for You warned us, saying, ‘Set bounds about the mountain and **consecrate** it.’” Exodus 19:23

^b **3:2 Next to him the men of Jericho built, and next to them Zaccur the son of Imri built.**

This chapter shows that the city had great value to those who did not even live there. Observant Jews from outlying areas committed themselves to the work even though the everyday benefits would not be theirs. The people had bought into the vision that this work was bigger than any individual. They knew that the work had to be done in concert with others.

^c **3:5 Moreover, next to him the Tekoites made repairs, but their nobles did not support the work of their masters.** This has also been translated “And next to them the Tekoites repaired, but their nobles would not stoop to serve their Lord” (ESV). Not everyone was convinced that this project was worth displeasing regional powers. Tekoa was (and is) located south of Jerusalem, possibly a target for opponents to the south like Geshem the Arab. Some of the common people of Tekoa were like the Good Samaritan in that they saw what needed to be done and they owned the responsibility themselves.

^d **3:7 Next to them Melatiah the Gibeonite and Jadon the Meronothite, the men of Gibeon and of Mizpah, also made repairs for the official seat of the governor *of the province* beyond the River.** Some translations show that these men were working under the authority of

of the goldsmiths made repairs. And next to him Hananiah, one of the perfumers, made repairs, and they restored Jerusalem as far as the Broad Wall^a. ⁹ Next to them Rephaiah the son of Hur, the official of half the district of Jerusalem, made repairs. ¹⁰ Next to them Jedaiah the son of Harumaph made repairs opposite his house. And next to him Hattush the son of Hashabneiah made repairs. ¹¹ Malchijah the son of Harim and Hasshub the son of Pahath-moab repaired another section and the Tower of Furnaces. ¹² Next to him Shallum the son of Hallohesh, the official of half the district of Jerusalem, made repairs, he and his daughters^b.

¹³ Hanun and the inhabitants of Zanoah repaired the Valley Gate. They built it and hung its doors with its bolts and its bars, and a thousand cubits of the wall to the Refuse Gate.

¹⁴ Malchijah the son of Rechab, the official of the district of Beth-haccherem repaired the Refuse Gate. He built it and hung its doors with its bolts and its bars.

¹⁵ Shallum the son of Col-hozeh, the official of the district of Mizpah, repaired the Fountain Gate. He built it, covered it and hung its doors with its bolts and its bars, and the wall of the Pool of Shelah at the king's garden as far as the steps that descend from the city of David. ¹⁶ After him Nehemiah the son of Azbuk, official of half the district of Beth-zur, made repairs as far as *a point* opposite the tombs of David, and as far as the artificial pool and the house of the mighty men^c. ¹⁷ After him the Levites carried out repairs *under* Rehum the son of Bani. Next to him Hashabiah, the official of half the district of Keilah, carried out repairs for his district. ¹⁸ After him their brothers carried out repairs *under* Bavvai the son of Henadad, official of *the other* half of the district of Keilah. ¹⁹ Next to him Ezer the son of Jeshua, the official of Mizpah, repaired another section in front of the ascent of the armory at the Angle. ²⁰ After him Baruch the son of Zabbai zealously repaired another section, from the Angle to the doorway of the house of Eliashib the high priest.^d ²¹ After him Meremoth the son of Uriah the son of Hakkoz repaired another section, from the doorway of Eliashib's house even as far as the end of his house. ²² After him the priests, the men of the valley, carried out repairs. ²³ After them Benjamin and Hasshub carried out repairs

the governor mentioned here. If so, Nehemiah had been able to recruit workers who were not necessarily of Hebrew descent (2 Samuel 15:19; 23:39).

^a 3:8 **Next to him Uzziel the son of Harhaiah of the goldsmiths made repairs. And next to him Hananiah, one of the perfumers, made repairs, and they restored Jerusalem as far as the Broad Wall.** Note the variety of vocations represented in the shared project. The people did not get to set their own schedules. They bent their schedules so they could join the work God was doing.

^b 3:12 **Next to him Shallum the son of Hallohesh, the official of half the district of Jerusalem, made repairs, he and his daughters.** Some suggest that we translate “daughters” as a reference to *small towns* over which Shallum ruled. That seems to me a translation forced on the text unnecessarily. There was no shame in women doing manual labor—particularly as they served alongside their father. The family-focused way this work was done leads me to stay with the traditional rendering. Shallum, like Zelophehad, was blessed with daughters rather than sons. He taught them to work.

^c 3:16 **After him Nehemiah the son of Azbuk, official of half the district of Beth-zur, made repairs as far as *a point* opposite the tombs of David, and as far as the artificial pool and the house of the mighty men.** This unknown landmark honored both David and his mighty men who were described in 2 Samuel 23.

^d 3:20 **After him Baruch the son of Zabbai zealously repaired another section, from the Angle to the doorway of the house of Eliashib the high priest.** The quality of Baruch's work that set him apart from all the other workers was noticed by Nehemiah. The illustrates the way this work was organized. It required individuals like Baruch to go all in. It required small groups and families to go all in. It required the entire congregation to go all in.

in front of their house. After them Azariah the son of Maaseiah, son of Ananiah, carried out repairs beside his house^a.²⁴ After him Binnui the son of Henadad repaired another section, from the house of Azariah as far as the Angle and as far as the corner.²⁵ Palal the son of Uzai *made repairs* in front of the Angle and the tower projecting from the upper house of the king, which is by the court of the guard. After him Pedaiah the son of Parosh *made repairs*.²⁶ The temple servants living in Ophel *made repairs* as far as the front of the Water Gate toward the east and the projecting tower.²⁷ After them the Tekoites repaired another section in front of the great projecting tower and as far as the wall of Ophel.

²⁸ Above the Horse Gate the priests carried out repairs, each in front of his house.²⁹ After them Zadok the son of Immer carried out repairs in front of his house. And after him Shemaiah the son of Shecaniah, the keeper of the East Gate, carried out repairs.³⁰ After him Hananiah the son of Shelemiah, and Hanun the sixth son of Zalaph, repaired another section. After him Meshullam the son of Berechiah carried out repairs in front of his own quarters.³¹ After him Malchijah, one of the goldsmiths, carried out repairs as far as the house of the temple servants and of the merchants, in front of the Inspection Gate and as far as the upper room of the corner.³² Between the upper room of the corner and the Sheep Gate the goldsmiths and the merchants carried out repairs^{b, c}.

^a 3:23 **After them Benjamin and Hasshub carried out repairs in front of their house. After them Azariah the son of Maaseiah, son of Ananiah, carried out repairs beside his house.**

We do not always get to serve in ways that directly benefit our own interests. These people did.

^b 3:31-32 **After him Malchijah, one of the goldsmiths, carried out repairs as far as the house of the temple servants and of the merchants, in front of the Inspection Gate and as far as the upper room of the corner. Between the upper room of the corner and the Sheep Gate the goldsmiths and the merchants carried out repairs.** There could be no holes left in this project. The description started with the Sheep Gate and ended with it. Just as Nehemiah circle the city for his inspection, the needed repairs were completely assigned.

^c 3:1-32 One temptation Bible teachers face in a book like Nehemiah is to present it as if its primary purpose were to give us leadership techniques or principles for good teamwork. Those certainly are secondary applications, but the hero of Nehemiah is not Nehemiah or even the diligent workers who polished off a major construction project in 52 days.

As always, the main story of any story is the Sovereign One who saves His people and keeps His promises. In this case the story shows how the Master Composer orchestrates a symphony of production using a bunch of oppressed, downtrodden Hebrew castoffs. God did a great work in Jerusalem through ordinary people. Here are some reasons why he will use you, believer:

1. The work of God uses the downcast and outsiders. Nehemiah was not only up against people who opposed a strong Israel. He needed to convince Israel that Jerusalem's walls were worth rebuilding.
2. The work of God makes diversity a strength. Just as in the body of Christ everyone becomes an evangelist, in Nehemiah's Jerusalem everybody became a stonemason. The work of God brings families together. It puts people of wide-ranging personalities, ethnicities and vocations on a common task. Look at the variety of vocations represented in this text:
 - High priest
 - Priests
 - Goldsmiths
 - Government officials
 - Perfumers

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- Merchants
3. The work of God prioritizes what leads people to the cross. Remember that the whole purpose of the priesthood and sacrificial system was to direct us to redemption. This means that the rebuilding and consecrating of the sheep gate was more than a restoration of a tradition.
 4. The work of God continues in the face of adversity. God is not intimidated by His enemies any more than the moon feels threatened by the dog that barks at it all night.