
PATTERNS FOR RESTORATION

An Introduction to the Book of Nehemiah

by Daniel A. Brown, PhD

LESSONS FROM NEHEMIAH

The **Book of Nehemiah** (“Nehemiah”= comfort, consolation from God) depicts the marvelous tale of a man who is moved upon with concern and compassion for the people of God. Hearing that Jerusalem still lays in ruins—in great distress and reproach—Nehemiah asks the king for permission and provision to rebuild the walls of the city of God.

The king grants Nehemiah his request on the behalf of others, and Nehemiah sets out on his journey of recovery. Like Zerubbabel and Ezra before him, Nehemiah encounters swift opposition from enemies who do not want restoration for the city. These enemies become enraged, and they mock, threaten and slander God’s people. They conspire to hinder and disturb the workers.

Nehemiah must divide the people’s time between the work of rebuilding the walls and defending against the threats and attacks of the enemies. At one point, the enemies even sent out an “open letter” to the public accusing Nehemiah of wanting to rule over everyone, rebuilding Jerusalem for his own personal ambition.

None of the enemy’s tactics succeed because Nehemiah refused to be intimidated. Under Nehemiah’s leadership, the people finished building the wall in 52 days. When the enemies saw that the wall had been rebuilt despite their threats, they grew discouraged themselves.

Years ago, my pastor (Jack Hayford) did an extended series on Nehemiah, using it as a spiritual commentary on how God goes about rebuilding the walls, not just of an ancient city, but of our personality. Pastor Jack’s teachings revolutionized my thinking about *Nehemiah*, and they also greatly impacted the body of Christ.

God wants to repair the damage that has been done to our sense of identity and personhood. He wants to rebuild our broken walls and re-establish the boundaries of our personality. From Ezra we

learned that God starts by rebuilding the temple—restoring our inner spirit to communion with God. In *Nehemiah* we witness the Spirit (Comforter) rebuilding walls and re-establishing gates (points of authority).

Remember, the events in *Nehemiah* and the rest of the Bible are historical: they really happened. But they also provide us with insights into the invisible, spiritual realm today. An actual person, Nehemiah, led the rebuilding of a historical city, Jerusalem. And the Holy Spirit will renew our identity and personality from the ravaged rubble of our broken lives. Both are true. Both can be studied in the Book of Nehemiah.