



REBUILDING

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They said to me, "Those who survived the exile and are back in the province are in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been burned with fire."

Nehemiah 1:3

What happens when you've been away from home for a while and return only to find that everything you once knew has been changed? All that was good and God-given turned upside down, inside out. Not at all as it was intended.

This is what happened to Nehemiah during a time he was away from Jerusalem. The Jews who had returned found themselves defenseless and humiliated in a destroyed city.

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[Nehemiah] sat down and wept and mourned for days, and [I] continued fasting and praying before the God of heaven. (Nehemiah 1:4)

Have you ever been in such a spot? Have you ever felt such grief? Have you ever prayed so hard?

Some words from my favourite poem, *If*, by Rudyard Kipling, come to mind:

*If you can . . . watch the things you gave your life to, broken,
And stoop and build 'em up with worn-out tools:*

Have you ever had to stoop to rebuild something that you may in the past have been able to do while upright?

But you got older. Everything was harder. You might have been unwell and not have had the energy.

How can you fix things today that were important enough for you to have given your life to yesterday?

One thing Nehemiah did was pray. Night and day he prayed. He knew rebuilding the walls was an enormous project. Only God would enable him to complete it. His faith was strong and he committed himself to the work. God would be with him.

What impressed me was how Nehemiah invited others to buy into his vision—those who believed in the big work he was undertaking. This needed to be a community project. It would benefit many.

He rallied people from all walks of life to join him. The Bible tells us he gathered together goldsmiths, perfume makers, rulers, priests and merchants. Everyone contributed.

And so it is with all good causes if they are to flourish. We can't do it alone. We need those who can think likewise.

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