



Studies in Ezra & Nehemiah

Text

Nehemiah 3:1-32

Topic

The Israelites are assigned certain sections of the wall and specific gates to repair

Title

“Where You Gonna Wall, Gate Builders?”

What city in the world matches your personality?

Yes, there’s an on-line quiz to tell you. Yes, I took it - even though the last quiz I took, *What Piece of IKEA Furniture Are You?*, said that I was “the trusty Lack side table.” It sells for \$8.99.

I was pleasantly surprised this time: Capri, Italy, described as “a place of admiration and refuge since the time of the Emperors of Rome.”

Whether or not it matches your personality, you may have a favorite city. It may be your hometown; or a vacation or a retirement destination.

God has a favorite city. There is only one city in the world that is “called by His Name” (Daniel 9:19). The Bible includes nearly 800 references to Jerusalem - “*the City of our God*” (Psalm 48:1,8).

- Psalm 132:13-14 For the LORD has chosen Zion; He has desired *it* for His dwelling place: "This *is* My resting place forever; Here I will dwell, for I have desired it."
- Psalm 87:1-3 “His foundation *is* in the holy mountains. The LORD loves the gates of Zion More than all the dwellings of Jacob. Glorious things are spoken of you, O city of God!”

The Bible sometimes says that **you** are *like* a city:

- Proverbs 25:28 Whoever has no rule over his own spirit Is like a city broken down, without walls.

- Jeremiah 1:18 For behold, I have made you this day A fortified city and an iron pillar, And bronze walls against the whole land...

The wall surrounding the city God loves was in ruin, exposing His people to danger. He sent Nehemiah to fortify the wall.

Without discounting the importance of fortifying the physical wall, because God sometimes likens His people to a city, we have a biblical freedom to make application of it to ourselves.

I'll organize my comments around two points: #1 The Ten Gates Remind You To Fortify Your Hope In The Lord, and #2 The Ten Gates Remind You To Fortify The Household Of The Lord.

#1 The Ten Gates Remind You
To Fortify Your Hope In The Lord

I thought we were talking about the wall, not its gates?

Chapter three describes the fortifying of the wall by going from gate-to-gate, for a total of ten gates. It names the gates and, for the most part, from their names it is easy to agree upon their meaning for the fortifying of our spiritual lives.

Nehemiah uses a Hebrew word, *chazaq*, translated in the NKJV, “made repairs.” The word is used thirty-five times in thirty-two verses. That should get our attention.

The word is variously translated in different versions of the Bible. If you look it up in *Strong’s Concordance*, you’ll find that there are literally dozens of ways to translate it.

I like the word “fortify.” It is as good as any, and I like it for two reasons:

1. First, it sounds more intense than “made repairs.” You can repair something without improving it, or making it stronger. “Fortify” conveys the idea that it would be stronger than before.

2. Second, “fortify” better communicates that the wall would need constant care, and unlike repairs, it couldn’t wait.

As I said, the fortifications are described going from gate-to-gate in a counter-clockwise direction. In this first point of our study, we will concentrate on the ten gates.

Neh 3:1 Then Eliashib the high priest rose up with his brethren the priests and built the Sheep Gate; they consecrated it and hung its doors. They built as far as the Tower of the Hundred, *and* consecrated it, then as far as the Tower of Hananel.

Neh 3:2 Next to *Eliashib* the men of Jericho built. And next to them Zaccur the son of Imri built.

You’ve seen signs on the gates of factories that say, “Deliveries Only,” or “Trucks Use Other Gate.” Certain gates are designated for certain purposes. Same was true of Jerusalem.

The Sheep Gate was the gate through which animals were brought into the city, notably the lambs for Temple sacrifices.

Nehemiah could have started with any of the ten gates; but he didn't. Starting at the Sheep Gate reminds us that the only way to God is through sacrifice. This gate reminds us of Jesus Christ, Whom John the Baptist identified as, "The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). In the Revelation, Jesus is, "the Lamb Who was slain" (5:12). In all, He is referred to as the Lamb about thirty times in the Revelation.

This is the spiritual gate through which every sinner must enter. "I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture" (John 10:9).

We fortify our hope in the Lord, first of all, by getting saved. I'm using "hope" in the biblical sense of a certainty.

By His death on the Cross, Jesus is the Savior of all men - especially those who believe.

Believers fortify their hope in the Lord at the Sheep Gate by reflecting upon their salvation by grace, through faith. If you did nothing to obtain salvation, you can do nothing to maintain it. It is the gift of God.

Not saved? *Get saved.* Saved? *Be fortified in the hope of eternal life.*

Neh 3:3 Also the sons of Hassenaah built the Fish Gate; they laid its beams and hung its doors with its bolts and bars.

Neh 3:4 And next to them Meremoth the son of Urijah, the son of Koz, made repairs. Next to them Meshullam the son of Berechiah, the son of Meshezabel, made repairs. Next to them Zadok the son of Baana made repairs.

Neh 3:5 Next to them the Tekoites made repairs; but their nobles did not put their shoulders to the work of their Lord.

No mystery as to the Fish Gate. Merchants used this gate when they brought fish from the Mediterranean Sea. There may have been a fish market near the gate.

At least seven of the original twelve disciples of Jesus were fishermen. Jesus famously said to them, “Follow Me and I will make you fishers of men” (Mathew 4:19).

We are saved to serve. All of us are to do the work of an evangelist. Each of us has gifts given to us by the Holy Spirit. We fortify our hope at the Fish Gate by serving Him.

Neh 3:6 Moreover Jehoiada 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 bars.

Neh 3:7 And next to them Melatiah the Gibeonite, Jadon the Meronothite, the men of Gibeon and Mizpah, repaired the residence of the governor *of the region* beyond the River.

Neh 3:8 Next to him Uzziel the son of Harhaiah, one of the goldsmiths, made repairs. Also next to him Hananiah, one of the perfumers, made repairs; and they fortified Jerusalem as far as the Broad Wall.

Neh 3:9 And next to them Rephaiah the son of Hur, leader of half the district of Jerusalem, made repairs.

Neh 3:10 Next to them Jedaiah the son of Harumaph made repairs in front of his house. And next to him Hattush the son of Hashabniah made repairs.

Neh 3:11 Malchijah the son of Harim and Hashub the son of Pahath-Moab repaired another section, as well as the Tower of the Ovens.

Neh 3:12 And next to him was Shallum the son of Hallohesh, leader of half the district of Jerusalem; he and his daughters made repairs.

Nehemiah is the only book in the Bible where it is called the Old Gate. Things that are old remind us of *who* and *what* came before us.

In the case of fortifying our hope in the Lord, it's important to remember that He alone is the Ancient of Days. Jesus is the Creator of all things. Christianity isn't a religion that was founded in the first century by Jesus or His followers. It is the fulfillment of God's promise to our first parents dating from the Garden of Eden.

Christianity isn't one of many ways to salvation. Jesus Christ is the only way, truth, and life - from eternity to eternity.

Here is another approach: No other belief system can give anyone hope. That's partly because they all demand you earn salvation; and that is something it is impossible to do. You can't work your way to Heaven; you can't get there by deeds. It is a gift - God's indescribable gift.

Neh 3:13 Hanun and the inhabitants of Zanoah repaired the Valley Gate. They built it, hung its doors with its bolts and bars, and *repaired a*

thousand cubits of the wall as far as the Refuse Gate.

The Valley Gate was where Nehemiah had set out on his night survey of the wall.

It's almost impossible to not associate valleys with trials and suffering. We're told we will "walk through the valley of the shadow of death" (Psalm 23:4). The hope you fortify at the Valley Gate is that the Lord *can not* and *will not* leave you or forsake you.

Neh 3:14 Malchijah the son of Rechab, leader of the district of Beth Haccerem, repaired the Refuse Gate; he built it and hung its doors with its bolts and bars.

Yes, this was the gate through which the city's refuse was taken to be dumped. Not very glamorous. Sort of like Mediterranean Avenue and Baltic Avenue in Monopoly.

Our fortification at this gate is for Jesus to cleanse us and make us more like Him:

- “Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish” (Ephesians 5:25-27).
- In Second Corinthians 7:1 we read, “Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”

You are being transformed, changed from glory-to-glory. He will complete the work; you will awake in eternity in His likeness.

Neh 3:15 Shallun the son of Col-Hozeh, leader of the district of Mizpah, repaired the Fountain Gate; he built it, covered it, hung its doors with its bolts and bars, and repaired the wall of the

Pool of Shelah by the King's Garden, as far as the stairs that go down from the City of David.

Neh 3:16 After him Nehemiah the son of Azbuk, leader of half the district of Beth Zur, made repairs as far as *the place* in front of the tombs of David, to the man-made pool, and as far as the House of the Mighty.

Neh 3:17 After him the Levites, *under* Rehum the son of Bani, made repairs. Next to him Hashabiah, leader of half the district of Keilah, made repairs for his district.

Neh 3:18 After him their brethren, *under* Bavai the son of Henadad, leader of the *other* half of the district of Keilah, made repairs.

Neh 3:19 And next to him Ezer the son of Jeshua, the leader of Mizpah, repaired another section in front of the Ascent to the Armory at the buttress.

Neh 3:20 After him Baruch the son of Zabbai carefully repaired the other section, from the buttress to the door of the house of Eliashib the high priest.

Neh 3:21 After him Meremoth the son of Urijah, the son of Koz, repaired another section, from

the door of the house of Eliashib to the end of the house of Eliashib.

Neh 3:22 And after him the priests, the men of the plain, made repairs.

Neh 3:23 After him Benjamin and Hasshub made repairs opposite their house. After them Azariah the son of Maaseiah, the son of Ananiah, made repairs by his house.

Neh 3:24 After him Binnui the son of Henadad repaired another section, from the house of Azariah to the buttress, even as far as the corner.

Neh 3:25 Palal the son of Uzai *made repairs* opposite the buttress, and on the tower which projects from the king's upper house that *was* by the court of the prison. After him Pedaiah the son of Parosh *made repairs*.

The Fountain Gate is located near the pool of Siloam and was often used by the people for ceremonial cleaning before proceeding on to the Temple.

This speaks to us of the living waters of the Holy Spirit that empower us. Jesus said: ‘Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him’ (John 7:38).

The hope that the indwelling Holy Spirit brings is a topic that could occupy us for a long time. For example, we’re told in the New Testament He is the guarantee of our completion in Christ. Not a guarantee like limited power train warranties; but an absolute guarantee.

Hope is fortified at the Fountain Gate realizing that He dwells within us, our Comforter.

Neh 3:26 Moreover the Nethinim who dwelt in Ophel *made repairs as far as the place* in front of the Water Gate toward the east, and on the projecting tower.

Neh 3:27 After them the Tekoites repaired another section, next to the great projecting tower, and as far as the wall of Ophel.

No jokes about the Water Gate. This one led down to the Gihon Spring which was located adjacent to the Kidron Valley.

The Water Gate is intended to remind us of the Word of God. We already quoted from Ephesians how Jesus washes us by the Word (Ephesians 5:26).

It was at the Water Gate that Ezra and the priests conducted a great Bible conference and explained the Scriptures to the people.

Hope in the Lord is fortified as we encounter Him on the pages of Scripture.

Neh 3:28 Beyond the Horse Gate the priests made repairs, each in front of his *own* house.

The Horse Gate was close to the King's stables and the men of Jerusalem would ride their horses out of this gate to war.

Spiritual warfare is inevitable. Good thing we have the whole armor of God to fortify our hope in Him (Ephesians 6:10-12).

2Ti 2:3 You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

2Ti 2:4 No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of *this* life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier.

The warfare itself fortifies our hope in the Lord in the sense that, if I'm at the Horse Gate, it's a proof I've been enlisted by my Lord.

Neh 3:29 After them Zadok the son of Immer made repairs in front of his *own* house. After him Shemaiah the son of Shechaniah, the keeper of the East Gate, made repairs.

Neh 3:30 After him Hananiah the son of Shelemiah, and Hanun, the sixth son of Zalaph, repaired another section. After him Meshullam the son of Berechiah made repairs in front of his dwelling.

The East Gate led directly to the Temple and is probably what we know today as the Golden Gate. Tradition says that Jesus entered the Temple on Palm Sunday through this gate.

Jewish and Christian tradition both connect the Golden Gate with the coming of the Messiah to Jerusalem.

For us, that means His prophesied Second Coming. Are you not fortified by the hope of His Second Coming?

Neh 3:31 After him Malchijah, one of the goldsmiths, made repairs as far as the house of the Nethinim and of the merchants, in front of the Miphkad Gate, and as far as the upper room at the corner.

The Hebrew word has a military connotation and refers to the mustering of the troops for numbering and inspection.

Since we just were thinking of the Lord's coming, this gate certainly reminds us that at His Second Coming He will judge between believers and nonbelievers - the sheep and the goats - and establish the Millennial Kingdom on the earth.

O how our hope is fortified knowing the Prince of Peace is coming to right wrongs and to rule with righteousness.

Neh 3:32 And between the upper room at the corner, as far as the Sheep Gate, the goldsmiths and the merchants made repairs.

Back to where we started. Between these ten gates the wall itself was being fortified, connecting all around the city.

My grand-boys were over the other night playing LEGO Batman on Nintendo. In certain levels, all that Batman or Robin have to do is walk through a door or gate to receive power in the game.

The ten gates... *Walk through each of them and you'll be fortified in the Lord.*

For example: Are you at a Valley Gate in your life? Don't stand arguing at the Valley Gate, wishing instead to be walking through one of the others. Don't let it halt you; go through it, with the certainty Jesus is with you every step of the way, and that all must work together for good.

#2 The Ten Gates Remind You To Fortify The Household Of The Lord

We missed some important things by concentrating on the gates. Two things in particular should have struck you:

1. First - Did you catch the varied occupations of the construction crew? Nehemiah was a cupbearer. There were priests, goldsmiths, perfumers, merchants, and folks that worked for the government. Also mentioned were the Nethinim - a group of Temple servants. In one instance, a man's daughters were mentioned.

2. Second - There was another highly repeated word. Sixteen times Nehemiah noted that the people worked “next” to one another.

I’ve pointed out before, talking mostly about Nehemiah, how incredible that such an immense project was entrusted to people with no skill to accomplish it. God supernaturally empowered perfumers and such to build His wall.

We should mention the nobles who thought themselves too good for such work. What a bunch of losers. Rank and status outside the church mean nothing in the church. The greatest of all is servant of all.

While we are on the subject, Nehemiah is often put forth as a great leader. He was - but only because he was a submitted follower of Jehovah. Don’t think God scoured the earth looking for the most qualified leader. He picked Nehemiah - an unlikely candidate - and molded him.

Back to where I was going with these observations.

Here we've seen a group of God's people, from all walks of life, working side-by-side right next to each other to build something on the earth for the Lord.

If your Bible wasn't open to Nehemiah, *you might think I just described the church on earth.*

We often say that the church is not a building - meaning it is not the brick and mortar where we meet that matters, but the believers in the meeting.

But the church **is** a building in this sense: We are each compared to living stones.

1 Peter 2:5 you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

Jesus said He would build His church. He does it, on earth, by taking the stones He has made alive and placing them next to one another as He wills in what we recognize as a local congregation of His people - the church.

It is this “next” to that so many who profess Jesus are actively disobeying by remaining independent, aloof from church.

It is not superior; it is insubordinate. I can’t tell a person how often to attend their church; or how involved to be. But I can tell believers who disdain the church that they are sinning. We are each called upon to fortify the household of faith by being next to one another, building up one another to go and fulfill the Great Commission.

The city that matches my personality isn’t Capri, Italy. It is a city I’ve only seen glimpses of on the pages of the Bible.

It’s the New Jerusalem, the city whose builder and maker is God. It’s going to be coming down from Heaven.

We read in the Revelation, “And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband” (Revelation 21:2).

While we wait - It's good to be next to you for this hour, and for these several decades, in this household of faith.