

**KAILUA CHRISTIAN CHURCH**  
**SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 23, 2025**  
**SERMON: Rebuilding Walls**  
**SCRIPTURE: LUKE 21:5-19**  
**PASTOR GREIG PORTER**

**Sermon: Rebuilding Walls**

**Intro**

Have you ever experienced something so broken that it seemed beyond repair? It could be a beautiful relationship gone bad. Maybe it was a dream of something you had always hoped for. Perhaps it was even a disappointment in your own spiritual life. When you reach the point where you think there is no fixing it, what is your reaction? Do you just give up? Do you internalize it and let it frustrate you? Or you could bury it and move on, trying to replace it with other things. Brokenness tends to paralyze us. **Then** the walls that get broken down stay broken. God's original plan is that walls would never be broken down in the first place. But because of man's sin, our perpetual work in this life is all about rebuilding those walls.

Two years ago, we all remember the devastating fire in Lahaina that took the lives of over **100 people**. It may seem surreal to us that, in this day and age, a fire can still consume an entire town in a matter of hours. But it happened. The hurt, confusion, and frustration of that incident continue to linger to this day. Red tape and distrust of authorities are widespread. And to many of us, it seems like a problem that we will not have a good answer to in our lifetimes. Though some homes have been rebuilt, Lahaina's infrastructure is not yet underway, and business is far from being a reality. It probably seems a pipe dream to most of its former residents at this point.

I imagine that some **have** given up on these broken walls and moved on. To them, it seems like the world has forgotten about them, and there is no way that they are going to be able to do what it takes to return to the normalcy that they knew in their beloved Lahaina town before 2023. Sometimes we are so traumatized by the events of our lives that we lose our will to go on, and we give up. This is also how it must have been for the **Israeli exiles** who came back to the ashes and rubble of **their** promised land two and a half millennia ago. They came home to a place that they didn't recognize. A realization of something they didn't want to believe.

Today, I would like to focus our discussion on the circumstances of these exiles described in the Old Testament. Going back to the sixth century before Christ, the nation of Israel —the chosen people of God —had seen years of prosperity that they probably believed would never end. This complacent attitude bred apathy and indifference in subsequent generations, leading to a continual downward spiral in their moral compasses. They drifted from God, and in time, God's sovereign control allowed the forces of Babylon to defeat them and send them into

exile. **Then**, the troops of Persia overthrew Babylon, and the reigning King Cyrus permitted some of the exiles to return and rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem. However, the walls that had fortified the city had never been rebuilt, leaving it vulnerable to attack. **Walls** are built on the foundations that support a city, and they enable it to function. This left an aching hole in Nehemiah's heart, and this is the state of affairs in which today's focus scripture passage takes place. We pick up in verse 4 of Nehemiah 1 with **the Rebuilding of the walls**.

### Scripture & Prayer

When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven. Then I said:

"LORD, the God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and keep his commandments, let your ear be attentive and your eyes open to hear the prayer your servant is praying before you day and night for your servants, the people of Israel. I confess the sins we Israelites, including myself and my father's family, have committed against you. We have acted very wickedly toward you. We have not obeyed the commands, decrees and laws you gave your servant Moses.

"Remember the instruction you gave your servant Moses, saying, 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations, but if you return to me and obey my commands, then even if your exiled people are at the farthest horizon, I will gather them from there and bring them to the place I have chosen as a dwelling for my Name.'

"They are your servants and your people, whom you redeemed by your great strength and your mighty hand. Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of this your servant and to the prayer of your servants who delight in revering your name. Give your servant success today by granting him favor in the presence of this man."

I was cupbearer to the king. (Nehemiah 1:4-11 NIV)

### Message Body

If you've ever been to Lahaina, you probably remember it as a quaint, picturesque little town that you felt safe and secure in. It was the kind of place that you wished you could hang out on a rocking chair at some waterfront inn and waste the whole day just relaxing in the cool island breeze. This is the way life is supposed to be, right? That would be nice. But we live in a fallen world, and our Savior has assured us that there **will** be trouble in this world. Things **do** happen, and circumstances **do** change for the worse.

I am currently working on a project focused on educating people about invasive plants introduced to the islands. It is claimed that these invasive plants contributed significantly to the perfect storm of events that led to the tragic Lahaina fire. Malicious or not, these plants could only be here by someone bringing them from elsewhere. And, as was the case with the Israelites, a lot of the trials that we encounter are self-inflicted wounds. The Israelites perpetuated a constant cycle of being **blessed** by God, then falling into a pattern of **forgetting Him**, which required them to cry to God to rescue the nation. In some ways, we never change.

When we find ourselves in this unwanted state, there are only two paths that we can take. We can plow ahead in the same fruitless manner, thinking that we will eventually figure it out on our own. Or, we can do the rational thing and realize our mistakes. We can acknowledge that we are powerless to overcome our adversity on our own. And we can go to God and ask Him to take the reins of our lives and daily give us direction. This is what repentance is. In 1 **John 1:9, it tells us that If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. (1John 1:9 NIV).** It takes a conscious decision to admit to ourselves that we have failed and we need help. We must acknowledge it before God. This is what we find Nehemiah doing in the first chapter of the book bearing his name. In verse four of this chapter, it says that he “*sat down and wept.*” In fact, the text says he wept for **days**. This is very telling. So often in today’s highly charged social media-driven environment, we see fallen stars showing remorse with crocodile tears, and then the very next day, they are back at the same old antics that got them there in the first place. No contrition, no repentance. Nehemiah’s remorse came genuinely from the heart. His mind was not wandering onto the next point on the agenda, so that he could get on with life. He was sincerely sorry for what had happened. He knew that a change was needed.

We struggle to accept that we are broken. We often think we are not so bad. Usually, we compare ourselves to others and tell ourselves that what we do isn’t as bad as what others do.

And because of the increasingly fast-paced world we live in, we can easily push it aside and distract ourselves with other mundane tasks that keep our minds busy. It’s like a virtual opiate that numbs our consciences from accepting the reality of our own depravity. But God tells us to “**Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.**” (Psalm 46:10 NIV) We need to take the time to slow down and face reality, recognizing God’s sovereignty and our brokenness. The first point we can take from this passage is:

### **Point 1: Rebuilding Begins with the Recognition of Brokenness.**

Well, Nehemiah did not stop **there**, because simply being sorry was not enough. He knew that something needed to be done to rectify the situation. He didn’t know what needed to be done, so he committed himself to fasting and praying. **Fasting is one of those spiritual traditions that has seemed to have fallen by the wayside. It is neither comfortable nor convenient. And that is precisely why it is effective. I will admit that for years, I did not fast. It was way too much of an inconvenience for me. However, I can attest that since making it a regular part of my search for God’s voice, its practice has immensely blessed me in times of trouble. It has provided me with guidance and direction when I was unsure of what to do.** Nehemiah saw the wisdom in this. He remained fervent in his pursuit of God’s will through his fasting. The concepts of prayer and fasting are found throughout the Bible as ways to draw closer to God and to commune with Him more deeply. There is no magic formula in this. It is all about eliminating distractions and having a genuine desire to seek His presence. Fasting may not be the only

discipline we can implement to get closer to God. But it is a great one to get near to Him. And we must be resolute in continuing to seek His voice.

Daniel and Esther practiced fasting in the Old Testament during times of impending tribulation. The early church also fasted before missionary journeys. Jesus Himself fasted for forty days at the start of His ministry. Whenever I face a major decision, I fast and pray, asking God for discernment on how to respond. Fasting is a vital way to align ourselves before God. He is mighty, and we depend on His mercy. Beginning with prayer and confession invites God's strength into our weakness. Without this step, we risk relying only on our own power, which isn't sustainable. We must recognize our need for God's wisdom and strength in our lives. Our second point is that:

### **Point 2: Rebuilding Requires Prayer and Confession**

Throughout the rest of this first chapter, Nehemiah primarily quotes scripture to request God's intervention. This highlights several points we should observe. In verse five, he prays, "O LORD God of heaven, the great and awesome God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments." What well-known New Testament passage comes to mind when you hear this? I thought of Romans 8:28. "[And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. \(Romans 8:28 NIV\)](#)" Nehemiah knew that when we put God first, God will put our best interests at the forefront. Now, this does not necessarily mean that circumstances will turn out exactly as we wish. But that is because God knows infinitely better what is good for us. [Isaiah 55:9](#) says, "[As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts \(Isaiah 55:9 NIV\)](#)." [God knows best.](#)

In this passage, Nehemiah also confesses **God's greatness** - (v.5) the great and awesome God. He **acknowledges God's goodness** - (v.5) keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him. He **confesses his own sin** - (v. 6) Even I and my father's house have sinned. He **remembers God's promises** - (v. 9) if you return to me and keep my commandments and do them, though your outcasts are in the uttermost parts of heaven, from there I will gather them. He **acknowledges God's mighty deeds** - (v. 10) your people, whom you have redeemed by your great power and by your strong hand. And he **delights in the Lord** - (v.11) your servants who delight to fear your name. Then, finally, he concludes by stating that he is a cupbearer, an **admission of humility**. Nehemiah correctly framed his relationship with God through this encounter. He confessed God's goodness, greatness, power, righteousness, and faithfulness. And he acknowledged his own sin and weakness, **yet he had joy in the Lord**. In summary, we can say Nehemiah had complete trust and hope in God. And for us too, we must remember that:

### **Point 3: Rebuilding Requires an Unwavering Hope/Faith in God**

Well, what was the result of this humble posturing before God? What is the message that we are to receive from this story? What is its pertinence to the modern-day church? And what

does it mean to this congregation? The remaining chapters of the book will give us a glimpse of those details. Throughout the ages, God has been good. He was good to the nation of Israel, and He has been good to us.

### Read Nehemiah 2:1-8

**In the month of Nisan in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, when wine was brought for him, I took the wine and gave it to the king. I had not been sad in his presence before, so the king asked me, "Why does your face look so sad when you are not ill? This can be nothing but sadness of heart."**

**I was very much afraid, but I said to the king, "May the king live forever! Why should my face not look sad when the city where my ancestors are buried lies in ruins, and its gates have been destroyed by fire?"**

**The king said to me, "What is it you want?"**

**Then I prayed to the God of heaven, and I answered the king, "If it pleases the king and if your servant has found favor in his sight, let him send me to the city in Judah where my ancestors are buried so that I can rebuild it."**

**Then the king, with the queen sitting beside him, asked me, "How long will your journey take, and when will you get back?" It pleased the king to send me; so I set a time.**

**I also said to him, "If it pleases the king, may I have letters to the governors of Trans-Euphrates, so that they will provide me safe-conduct until I arrive in Judah? And may I have a letter to Asaph, keeper of the royal park, so he will give me timber to make beams for the gates of the citadel by the temple and for the city wall and for the residence I will occupy?" And because the gracious hand of my God was on me, the king granted my requests.**

**(Nehemiah 2:1-8 NIV)**

When we read this passage, we see that, yes, the vision for these people came from one person. God called Nehemiah to be a bold mouthpiece and an encourager to the people. It took courage for him to approach the King so directly. He needed to act on the conviction that God had placed in his heart. But he could not have done it by himself. It takes the entire church to do the work of God. Throughout Chapter Three, we see that when Nehemiah journeyed to Jerusalem, each member played a vital role in carrying out his mission. Scripture tells us that this wall was completed in 52 days. The whole congregation worked together in unity. It had been sitting in ruins for many years. It has been said that the rarest of all virtues is courage. However, when God's people are faithful to carry out His mission, His power will compensate for any deficiencies we may have, ensuring success for the task at hand. **For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. (Romans 12:4-6a NIV)** Where is God calling you to move from prayer to participation? Does he have a leadership mission for you? Or has He called you to service within the big picture? Perhaps both. Maybe it's serving in

ministry, reconciling with a family member, or helping restore someone else's life. Whatever it is:

#### **Point 4: Rebuilding Walls Requires Bold Individual & Corporate Action**

We must be ready to hear God's voice and commit to whatever God is calling us to. And finally, this story demonstrates, in chapters 4-6, that there will unfortunately be opposition and adversity. The text tells us that the non-Jewish inhabitants of the area plotted against them to prevent them from succeeding in rebuilding the wall. Whether it is out of jealousy or disagreement, there will be those who try to discourage us from succeeding in God's work. It is inevitable. John 15:18-19 says, *If the world hates you, remember that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. But since you do not belong to the world, because I have chosen you out of it, that's why the world hates you. (John 15:18-19 NIV).* When we are bouncing back from devastation and hardship, we need to be aware that it won't always be smooth sailing. Satan knows to attack us when we are weak. But remember, *the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. (1 John 4:4b NIV) (Illustration of eagle and crow, ascending).* We have the strength of the Holy Spirit abiding within us. I heard an old Southern gospel adage that goes, *If the mountain were smooth, you couldn't climb it.* This is God's way of strengthening us. In the Kingdom work, we are a team with God, and He will be faithful to guide us and do the heavy lifting.

#### **Point 5: Rebuilding walls will put us in painful positions**

##### **Conclusion**

In this story, as in present-day life, we tend to focus on the hardships we have. We fall into a victim mentality, and what we don't have. I am 66 years old, so the COVID pandemic hit right about the time I was thinking about slowing down. It completely eliminated the career I had at the time, and depleted a good share of my retirement savings. To this day, I continue to struggle to regain a stable income. I have felt helpless and worthless at times. But God has spoken to me and reminded me that I have my health. I have my family. I have a home and food on the table. I have everything and more than He has promised. I, like the Apostle Paul, prayed for what I wanted. But as it says in 2 Corinthians 12:9, *"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness. (2 Corinthians 12:9b NIV)* He will be faithful to provide for our needs.

This is Thanksgiving week. It is a time for reflection on what we have been given. In *James 1:17*, it says, *"Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. (James 1:17 NIV)"* The very breath that we breathe comes from Him. We have so much to be thankful for. This is an ideal time for us to reflect on what God has given us personally, to our families, our communities, and the church. Let us give Him the glory and the gratitude He deserves for that.

Let us also examine how some of these gifts have been compromised or broken, whether by our own self-inflicted actions or by circumstances beyond our control. Let us not get discouraged, but rather take time to reflect on God's goodness and mercy. Let us be contrite and repentant, seeking God's will in everything we do. Let us confess our sins to one another and pray for one another that we might be healed. Let us remember God's promises and His mighty deeds. We can take heart in that. We can take hope in that. Let us trust in Him and delight in His goodness. And as humble and ordinary members of the body of His church, may we submit to His plan in our lives. We are all individual parts of the unified collective of His universal church. May we be resolute in the years to come to be used by God that His Kingdom would be here on earth as it is in Heaven. By His power and in His name, our service for Him here on earth will prevail. May he be glorified in all. Let us diligently pray for him to move in us and use us to rebuild the broken walls.

### **Prayer**