

Unwavering Resolve

Everyone on the Wall

Nehemiah 3

May 31, 2026

Introduction

Imagine two people who want to build a house.

The first one is filled with passion. He's seen a beautiful home in a magazine, his heart is racing, and he can't wait to start. So he grabs a hammer, buys a pile of lumber, and starts nailing boards together wherever it feels right. He's inspired, but three weeks in, he's got crooked walls, a roof that won't hold, and a pile of wasted materials. The inspiration was real, but it had nowhere to go.

The second person feels that same spark—but before she picks up a single tool, she sits down with an architect's blueprint. That blueprint tells her where the foundation goes, which walls bear the weight, who pours the concrete, and who frames the rooms. The same passion now has a pattern. Everyone on the crew knows their place, their part, and their purpose. And at the end, a house actually stands.

Here's the difference: ***inspiration without information builds nothing that lasts.***

When Nehemiah looked at the broken walls of Jerusalem, God's sovereignty, covenant love, glory, and providence were the spark that moved him. But those same truths were also the blueprint. They didn't just light a fire under him—they also shaped the strategy. They told him why the work mattered, but also how it would get done.

And what we'll see is that everyone has a place, a part, and a purpose. God never gives us a vision He doesn't also give us a way to build

Body

Everyone Has a Place

The list begins with Eliashib the high priest. Look at v. 1.

The high priest Eliashib and his fellow priests began rebuilding the Sheep Gate. They dedicated it and installed its doors.

The Sheep Gate was the entry point for sacrificial animals brought into the temple courts, and Ezra (see that book) had rebuilt the temple so that the people could rightly worship. They rightly wanted to lean in to that progress, reinforcing the importance of worship as they began to rebuild. It was a subtle but important way the leadership could communicate that fear of God produces labor for God, not the other way around. **(Title Slide)**

But then notice who comes next.

- Verse 3: the sons of Hassenah rebuilt the Fish Gate.
- Verse 8: Uzziel, son of Harhaiah, one of the goldsmiths. Right beside him, Hananiah, one of the perfumers.
- Verse 12: Shallum son of Hallohesh, ruler of half the Jerusalem district. He worked alongside his daughters.
- Read through the entire chapter and you find a staggering diversity of occupation: priests and Levites (vv. 1, 17), civic rulers (vv. 9, 12, 14-19), merchants (v. 32), temple servants (v. 26), and craftsmen whose professional skills had nothing to do with masonry.

You see, ***everyone has their place when they accept God's invitation to join Him in His work. The work that God is doing is not open to only a few religious professionals supported volunteers and donors. No. Everyone has a place in God's work.***

Unless, of course, they will not want to have their place. Verse 5 disrupts the momentum. Read it with me.

(Slide) "The Tekoites made repairs, but their nobles did not lift a finger in service to their Lord."

A whole class of people with influence and resources sat out. Note the phrasing carefully: they would not "lift a finger." This was a chosen posture of non-participation dressed up as dignity. They were ABOVE participating. They didn't want to have a place **with** everyone. They wanted their OWN place SEPARATE from everyone, yet while benefitting from the WORK that everyone else was doing. ***(Title Slide)***

Illustration – Like Roommates who only pay rent

Every congregation has a version of this. People who are too important, too educated, too refined, too busy to do the unglamorous work. They only want to do what THEY want to do. The opportunities and needs of the church don't excite **them**, so they don't engage.

The gospel has something to say to the Tekoite spirit in all of us. The Son of God, who held every authority in heaven and earth, took on flesh and worked with His hands. He washed feet. He touched lepers. He ate with the wrong people. He died a criminal's death. If the Lord of the wall humbled Himself to that degree, no section of the wall is beneath any of us.

The cross levels every pretension. It doesn't leave room for nobles who won't stoop. Everyone, in God's economy, has a place, and should partake it in it.

Everyone Has a Part

But not just a place. Everyone has a part as well. Slow down and notice a phrase repeating through this chapter. By my count, some variation of "next to him," "after him," or "beside him" appears more than two dozen times.

(Slide)

Verse 2: "The men of Jericho built next to him, and next to them Zaccur son of Imri built."

Verse 4: "Meremoth son of Uriah... made repairs next to them."

Verse 5: "The Tekoites made repairs next to them."

Some version of this phrase continues relentlessly, gate by gate, section by section, all the way around the city. It's one of the most repetitive passages in Scripture, and the repetition is the point. No one built it alone. The wall of Jerusalem was not a solo project. It was accomplished through dozens of work parties, each one responsible for a manageable stretch, each one dependent on the group beside it to hold the line. If any section failed, the whole defense failed. The wall was only as strong as the connection between the sections.

Many believers think of their church as merely a place to attend rather than as an organic body with which they are intimately involved. They think of church as simply a worship gathering, a weekly religious duty. In many churches, the paid staff carries the burden of the church's spiritual health, while the members happily play their role as recipients.

Yet Nehemiah 3 describes a community where the ruler of the district (v. 12) and the goldsmith (v. 8) and the Levites (v. 17) are all in the dust together, laying stones beside each other. This kind of side-by-side service does something to relationships. You cannot work "next to" someone for months and remain a stranger. ***Shared labor creates shared identity. The people who rebuild together become the people who belong to each other.***

Illustration/Application – Power of service to build community

Everyone Has a Purpose

Everyone has a place and a part, but also, A PURPOSE. The phrase "next to" is everywhere, but so is another phrase.

Verse 10: "Jedaiah son of Harumaph made repairs opposite his house."

Verse 23: "Benjamin and Hasshub made repairs opposite their house."

Verse 28: "The priests made repairs above the Horse Gate, each one opposite his own house."

They built the section of wall directly in front of where they lived. This is not incidental. It's a principle of vocation and stewardship that we should start where God has placed us. The most natural and most sustainable form of service is care for the neighborhood God has given you to inhabit. Before you can manage distant sections, you tend what is immediately in front of you.

We live in a culture that glamorizes going. The most celebrated Christians seem to be the ones who leave everything to serve somewhere far away. And cross-cultural missionary work is genuinely beautiful and necessary. But ***Nehemiah 3 challenges the assumption that God's most important work always happens elsewhere.*** The person who faithfully teaches the same Sunday school class for twenty years, pouring into the children whose faces he knows by name, is building "opposite his own house." The one who opens her home repeatedly to the isolated neighbor, who is present in the same neighborhood week after week, is doing the work of the wall.

Illustration/Application – Up late, Missing Class for Worship

Sometimes the most holy thing we can do is go to class (so to speak). Sometimes that's our purpose.

Conclusion/Application

(Title Slide) So, around the wall, everyone has a place, everyone plays a part, and everyone has a purpose. The same three truths of this chapter come into sharper focus at the Lord's table this morning.

This is why we gather at this table. The Lord's Supper is where the three truths of this chapter come into sharp focus.

Everyone in Christ has a place. There is no section of this table reserved for the spiritually accomplished. The bread and cup are given equally to the one who has followed Christ for decades and to the one who is barely holding on. The cross leveled every pretension.

Everyone in Christ has a part. We do not observe Communion. We participate in it. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 11 that we "proclaim the Lord's death" when we eat and drink. Every person at this table is a witness. Every person who takes the bread is declaring this death was real, this death was necessary, and this death was enough.

Everyone in Christ has a purpose. We eat and drink "in remembrance of him." We come as people who belong to the one whose body was broken and whose blood was poured out for us. When we come to this table, we are rehearsing again who we are and what we owe and what has been given.

Come to the table. Not because your section of the wall is finished. Not because you have earned your place. Come because the Lord of the wall has made a place for you, taken His part beside you, and fulfilled the purpose none of us could.