



## **A Revival From The Rubbish**

**Nehemiah 4:1-3** – *“1 But it came to pass, that when Sanballat heard that we builded the wall, he was wroth, and took great indignation, and mocked the Jews.” “2 And he spake before his brethren and the army of Samaria, and said, What do these feeble Jews? will they fortify themselves? will they sacrifice? will they make an end in a day? will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burned?” “3 Now Tobiah the Ammonite was by him, and he said, Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall.”*

### **I. INTRODUCTION – WINSTON CHURCHILL**

Winston Churchill is remembered as perhaps the greatest prime minister in the history of Great Britain. By the steel of his will, he led his island nation to stand against Hitler and eventually triumph in World War II. But years before that victorious moment for the ages, Churchill found himself plunging through a succession of devastating trapdoors—each one worse than the one before.

In August 1929, Churchill had managed to bring in approximately \$70,000 into the family coffers. That’s a lot of money even today. In 1929, that was an unimaginable amount of money for a single month’s work. He invested nearly all of it into the American stock market. He then jotted a note to his wife saying how pleased he was to finally reach a place of financial independence. Less than ninety days later the stock market fell through its own trapdoor and Churchill lost virtually everything.

It was a major blow. Churchill had experienced ninety days of financial security—and then the bottom fell out. For the first time in his adult life he had been on easy street enjoying the prospects of a comfortable future and then the trapdoor fell open beneath his feet and down he went.

That setback alone would be enough to send most any man into the dungeon of depression. But there were two more difficulties that waited quietly and patiently for Churchill to arrive. In 1931, after serving his entire adult life as a central figure in the British government, he was not invited to serve in the cabinet. This was another staggering blow to Churchill. He had been banished to the political wilderness. While Hitler was working full-time to build his war machine, Churchill, virtually the only British politician who saw the reality of Hitler’s threat, was put out to pasture. When he should have been center stage, he was banished to his country home where he wrote, painted, and built brick walls and cleaned out the ponds to stay busy. The great statesman was sent down to the minors to play Class A ball when he should have been starting in the All Star game. This defeat was even more bitter than the financial loss. It was heating up in the British steel furnace.

And then in the same year, while he was trying to hold things together financially and fight off depression of political defeat, he decided to take a tour of Canada and the United States. In New York City he looked the wrong way while crossing a street and was hit by a taxi traveling at thirty-five miles per hour. The accident sent him to the hospital, clinging to life by a thread.

In less than three years he had suffered three shattering transitions that had devastated him financially, then politically, and then in an accident that nearly cost him his life. In a letter to their son from the hospital, his wife wrote: “Last night he was very sad and said he had now in the last two years had three very heavy blows. First the loss of all that money in the crash, then loss of political position in the Conservative Party and now this terrible injury. He said he did not think he would ever recover completely from the three events.”

At that point, as he recovered in that New York hospital room, Churchill was fifty-seven years old. Nine years later, at the right moment in history, the government that had ignored him would turn to him in desperation. But he could not see the future from the hospital bed. In fact, his prospects looked so bad that at that moment one of his enemies was emboldened enough to pronounce a political eulogy: “Churchill is finished!” Famous last words!

History proved that statement to be just a bit premature.

-Maybe you are like Churchill and have experienced some devastating events, losses, and reversals. You feel like the heat and stress from a dozen pressing circumstances and are slowly pressing you and bending you out of shape.

-But God is bigger than all of that, and there is a place with God that you can recover.

## **II. LESSONS FROM NEHEMIAH**

-From this great book we find a multitude of lessons (of which I do not intend to bring everyone of them to you, so take heart). Here is Nehemiah faced with the dilemma of a broken down wall and of an enemy who is attempting to thwart every effort toward reconstruction.

-No matter who you are nor how long you may live, when you start trying to reconstruct and rebuild something spiritual in your life you will be forced to face with the struggle.

-Sometimes when you look to this world around us, you may even echo the question of Sanballat:

Will a revival come from a trash pile?

Will there be reconstruction from the rubbish?

Can riches come from the refuse?

-When we look at the trash pile of what used to be a wall and a Temple in Jerusalem, something within shrinks back and asks, “How in this world can anything constructive come out of this thing?”

-But within that element of mayhem and destruction there were some clear principles and laws that governed it. Refuse must have its fixed rules and the slag-heap will have certain statutes.

### **A. The First Law – The Law of Deterioration**

-From the picture in the Bible it becomes clear that all material things, whether as sacred as the Temple or as natural as a forest, are on their way to the trash pile. To a man who places all of his trust in his material holdings that fact sounds to him as a funeral dirge.

-What he loves is going to deteriorate. That is the first law of the refuse.

-For the man who places his trust in his rituals of religion, that too will find a place among the rubbish. For those who place their trust in a building remember the words of the Lord:

**Mark 13:1 2** – “1 And as he went out of the temple, one of his disciples saith unto him, Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here!” “2 And Jesus answering said unto him, Seest thou these great buildings? there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.”

-And the prophetic words of the Lord came true when the Roman, Titus, came to Jerusalem and destroyed it. It is significant what the Lord had to say. It is well to set our affections on the things that the rubbish heap can have no terrors.

-Sanballat mockingly asked, “What do these feeble Jews?” Remember that when you set your affections on things above and not on things below, the power of the Almighty God sets forth within you.

The lofty trees grow from the smallest of seeds.

The greatest of rivers flow from the smallest of fountains in their origin.

The slenderest of wires hold the greatest of weights.

Injury to the smallest of nerves can lead to the most excruciating pain.

The largest of machines turn with the smallest of pulleys.

The greatest intellectual light is often started by the understanding of the smallest truth.

-Forget the mocking of Sanballat. Sometimes the most difficult thing for explorers is the endurance of the stinging insects they face along the way. Tropical countries find these tiny, noxious creatures to be much more destructive of their peace and comfort than the larger more deadly animals which sometimes happen across them.

-Many a man faces courageously a grave danger but becomes a unthinking fool when faced with the petty annoyances that have worn his nerves and irritated him to the point of a loss of self-control. Every man who attempts to do something with his life will find himself coming in contact with a cloud of petty critics who are as hard to bear as they would be if they were inspired by hate.

-Much of the criticisms are more inspired by ignorance than they are of hate. The misrepresentations and misconceptions which good men suffer are a part of the path of life.

-The real answer to criticism is a man's life and his work. A busy man has no time to stop and meet his critics in detail, he must do his work and let the excellence of his work be his only protest.

## **B. The Second Law – The Law of Occupation**

-For Nehemiah in one picture, for the American settlers in another picture, even until today for those who are building and constructing, we find the ground to be occupied.

-That is the second law, the Law of Occupation. The ground is not just waiting cleared and ready for the seed or for the foundation, but rather it is covered with pine needles, with leaves, with moss. Great stones lie scattered throughout the land. Giant pines, oaks, and black gum, fight with the twining, creeping vines and the waving grasses for every inch of soil.

-Weeds peer out from every one of the vacancies, every crack and cranny, every corner and crevice is occupied.

-Nature detests a vacuum. Wherever the foot of man has failed to walk, wherever the hand of man has failed to work, God's countless and invisible farmers plow and harrow and cultivate, plant and reap, and produce the vast, tangled underbrush.

-The moss is found on the stones of Jerusalem because no Nehemiah has come to build the city. The scrub oaks and scrub pines grow maddeningly on the hillsides because no man has planted orchards there.

-Is that not true with our own minds? The mind becomes a wilderness of foolish imaginations because clean and wholesome thoughts have not been planted there. The heart becomes, like Jerusalem, a wilderness and a desolation because the Kingdom of God has never been established there.

-Evil is present. . . Evil always evolves where good evacuates.

-In Genesis 26, a remarkable thing occurs there. Isaac found himself in the middle of a famine and instead of folding up and going home something happened within.

-Here Isaac was, a man looking for the promises of God and instead finds himself in the middle of a famine. Not only living in the middle of a famine but now God expects him to stay in the land.

-The fields were dry and barren. Hot winds rustled across the land and scorched what little existence of weeds that were still standing. The small springs no longer bubbled clear, cold water. Even the seed appeared to be withered in the sacks.

Isaac was looking for bread and instead he found perseverance.

Isaac wanted abundance but instead found a shortage.

Isaac wanted the comforts of life but instead found communion with God.

What is better, bread or faith? Abundance or God?

-When it seems as if there is nothing working. . . . . Plant the seed, water it with your tears and your devotion. . . . .  
Keep working and God will bring an increase.

### **C. The Third Law – The Law of Elevation**

-One asks the question:

What makes rubbish, rubbish?

What makes trash, trash?

-A new set of clothes may be a dream today and it may be despair by tomorrow. What has so suddenly changed delight to disgust and made the fashion of yesterday the laugh of today? It is a new style that has caused this disaster. It will always be this way, whether it is dresses or houses, it will be the new style that comes along and flings the satisfaction of one day to the slag-heap of the next.

-So it is like the man in Australia who has a land that flows with rich hardwoods and decides to tear it down. The kangaroos and the parrots see no reason to change this. But this man in his dissatisfaction brings in the fury of the axe and the fire and tears it down.

-In his mind, he determines the necessity for apples and begins to create the orchard all in the throes of the new style. Then whenever the orchard begins to bring it's yield, the man soon dissatisfied finds himself looking for gold under the soil. So the orchard is stripped and the fruit-trees become firewood so that he may seize that precious metal.

-Later on, in the peril of a watery grave, he flings the very gold into the ocean that may save his life. The hardwoods, the fruit, the gold, each in their own turn become trash, flung to the rubbish by the alluring force of a higher attraction.

-Life, itself is not the last stage, the martyrs cheerfully threw even life away, fascinated by the wealth of the call of heaven.

-Even the great apostle Paul, found himself intrigued by the rubbish heap? He counted all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord, whom he had suffered the loss of all things and did count them but dung that he might win Christ.

-The rubbish heap can have no grander word written of it than that.

### **D. The Fourth Law – The Law of Transformation**

-God makes his loveliest roses out of rubbish. The charred ashes of yesterdays brush nourish the roots of tomorrows orchard. If the refuse of the ages had been allowed to accumulate, the world would be unlivable. The air would be heavy with pestilence. We bury our rubbish, and it comes back to us in fruits and flowers.

-That brings us the fourth and last law, the Law of Transformation.

-That is where the Church finds her most difficult problem. In this city there are crowds of people who have gone to the wall. They have been crushed and beaten down by life. Under the fierce system of competition the iron law of survival has flung them and discarded them at the social slag-heap.

-Sadly some of them hate churches. . . . They think that if churches had done their duty, then things would not be as bad as they are.

-They forget that, if churches had *NOT* done their duty, things would be ten thousand times worse than what they are.

They snatch at political answers and candidates to save them.

They work toward build a financial kingdom that will secure them.

They struggle to gain an outlet of entertainment to rescue them.

They look for a meaningful relationship to anchor them.

They pursue all sorts of decadent ploys to preserve them.

-And it all comes to nothing.

-This world talks about a need for reform, restraint, culture, manners, peace, education, when what the supreme need is a revival. An outpouring of the Holy Ghost!!! Every time we come to church.

-Now the mission of the Church is to do for this ruined mass what Nehemiah did for the rubbish heaps of Jerusalem—to build out of them the city of God.

“Will they bring a revival out of a rubbish-heap?” asks Sanballat. Of course!!!!

-A rubbish heap is God’s raw material. A revival is His finished product. Let this church get to work. She alone is equipped for the duty. If she fails, her collapse will be the event of the ages.

-The church of Jesus Christ knows how to transform this mass of refuse into a field of roses.

-Paul understood this magic secret. He looked at the unbridled lust, the grinding tyranny, and the hideous idolatry of the city of the Caesars, and was unabashed. And he gave his reason. “The Gospel,” he said, “is the power of God unto transformation.”

-Paul was willing to face down the men who had mastered Italy, Greece, and Northern Africa. Rome had spread out it’s arms in such a way that it had gathered to itself the control of the East and the West, so that in all the world there was no government that was not under retention to Rome. Rome was a city by itself, it was the capital, not of the nation, but of the world.

-Paul strode into Rome without the grace of culture. He was not a gifted motivational speaker but he did have something turning over inside of his soul. He called it a “treasure” in an earthen vessel. He said, “It is a power. . . . a power unto salvation. . . . for every one who believes.”

-He saw that the foulest filth of Rome might become the fairest fragrance of the New Jerusalem.

-This power of God:

He can make a dead rod bud.

He can part the waters at the Red Sea.

He can sweeten the waters at Marah.

He can trouble the waters at Siloam and heal people.

He can make an axe head float.

He can overcome sin with a great flood. (He can bury my sin in baptism.)

He can set a bush on fire and it not be consumed.

He can make a rod turn into a serpent and back again.

He can create bedlam in the house of the captors with a few plagues.

He can bring water out of a rock.

He can give bread to me in a dry place.

He can restore my soul.

He can start a fire on a mountain called Carmel.

He can make a donkey talk.

He can translate Enoch and Elijah.

He can give a double portion of the Spirit.

He can take a farmer named Gideon and wipe out the Midianites.

He can knock down the walls at Jericho.

He can make the sun stand still until the battle is won.

He can wipe out the Philistines with a jawbone and bring water out of the that same jawbone.

He can feed a man with the ravens or with an empty barrel.

He can cleans the leprosy of Namaan.

He can deliver three men in a furnace.

He can create life in a dead man when his body lands on the bones of a dead prophet.

He can turn water into wine.

He can walk on water.

He can calm the storms of life.

He can straighten a withered hand.

He can cast demons out of a madman.

He can fill empty nets with fish.

He can cleanse a leper and open a dead man's eyes.

He can feed a multitude with some bread and fish.

He can raise a widow's son, Jarius' daughter, and set Lazarus free.

He can heal a woman with an issue of blood.

He can put a coin in the mouth of the fish.

He can reattach a severed ear.

He can love His enemies.

He can go to a Cross, but the nails could not hold Him.

He can go to a Grave, but the stone would not hold Him.

He is capable of building a heaven for losers.

He can deliver. . . . .

He can save. . . . .

He can overcome. . .

He can provide. . .

He can meet the need. . .