

I. Introduction:

- A. Are you familiar with Shakespeare's famous soliloquy from Hamlet?
1. You may think you're not, but I am reasonably sure you have heard some of it.
 2. It goes like this: *"To be, or not to be, that is the question: Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
a. The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, Or to take Arms against a Sea of troubles,
b. And by opposing end them: to die, to sleep; No more; and by a sleep, to say we end
c. The heart-ache, and the thousand natural shocks That Flesh is heir to? 'Tis a consummation
d. Devoutly to be wished. To die, to sleep, To sleep, perchance to Dream; aye, there's the rub,
e. For in that sleep of death, what dreams may come, When we have shuffled off this mortal coil, Must give us pause. "*
 3. This is about a third of the discussion Hamlet has with himself about death, but the rest takes us beyond my intention.
 4. My point comes from the thought – *"To die, to sleep, To sleep, perchance to Dream; aye, there's the rub."*
 5. Did you know that William Shakespeare died in 1616 only 5 years after the date usually applied to the version of the Bible which we use? Shakespeare and the Bible spoke the same language.
- B. With that being true, what is the meaning of *"there's the RUB?"*
1. *"There's the rub"* refers to *"rubbish."*
 2. *"Rub"* in this case is a noun, & it means the same as *"rubbish,"* the stuff which comes as a result of rubbing.
 3. *"Rub"* or *"rubbish"* might be as fine as dust, or it could be heavy beams and boulders.
 4. And this takes us back to **Nehemiah 4**.
 5. Judah said in **verse 10** – *"The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and there is much rubbish; so that we are not able to build the wall."*
 6. Earlier Sanballat 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?"*
- C. On the evening of the third day after his arrival in Jerusalem, Nehemiah attempted to make a survey of the walls of the city.
1. He went out the Valley Gate in the southwest corner and rode east above the Valley of Hinnom.
 2. When he turned to go up toward the City of David, he was cut off by all the debris – the rubbish in the way.
 3. He had to turn back, and for some reason he didn't try to ride up the western side of the city, but reentered at the Valley Gate. Was the problem more rubbish blocking his way?
 4. As Sanballat said, and as the Jews related, the walls had been destroyed, and the only thing in their wake was rubbish – the off-scouring of the original walls.
 5. And remember the walls of Jerusalem in the glory days of Solomon were huge – high and thick.
 6. There was **A LOT** of rubbish in the way of the rebuilding.
- D. Once again, I would like to make a few spiritual and ecclesiastic applications. For example ...
1. I think the Lord wants us to be like the workers on the wall, building our Jerusalem for the glory of God.
 2. The place of God's worship, the temple, needs to be protected – not just by Christian bodies, but by more substantial stuff.
 3. Sure, it may be surrounded by those who love the Lord – ourselves, our homes and our families.
 4. But it is God's will that even surrounding **us** there be a wall of beauty and protection.
 5. As Nehemiah said to Sanballat in **chapter 2** – *"YE have no portion, nor right, nor memorial, in Jerusalem."*
 6. It is by invitation only that the heathen can enter the city – and that requires walls.
- E. Wednesday we briefly looked at **chapter 3** and the great crew of people working on the wall.
1. They weren't all together working in a cluster with the wall going up in an on-going circle from the Sheep gate around the city to the Sheep gate once again.
 2. No, the workers were scattered in small family groups or as friends from their originating communities.

- F. I believe that this might illustrate the way God's work is supposed to be done.
1. The work of the Lord should be multifaceted – not confined simply to a weekly gathering in the temple.
 2. After meeting together in the House of the Lord to worship and sing the songs of Zion...
 - a. after being encouraged in the Word of God... after a time of fellowship with one another...
 - b. we should depart with a desire to build our unique portion of the wall – as families and individuals.
- G. As I tried to say the other day, the chapters of this book must not be understood as strictly chronological.
1. **Chapter 4 verse 10** had to be handled before **chapter 3** could have been completed.
 2. Later chapters will discuss other problems, and they blend in with **chapter 3** as well.
 3. Here, in this case, we are told about the **rubbish problem**.

II. What were some of the hindrances to the carrying out or to the completion of the work of the Lord?

- A. Maybe we should also ask, why wasn't the wall repaired earlier?
1. I know that **Ezra's primary desire** was to rebuild the temple and reignite the worship of the Lord.
 2. But why did it take Nehemiah to come along to consider the walls?
 3. Without trying to put Ezra or anyone else down, wasn't it matter of leadership – or a lack thereof?
 4. Until now, there was no one in Jerusalem to say, **"Now let's move on to building a wall."**
 5. Everyone was tired and, to be honest, quite satisfied that the temple had been rebuilt.
- B. **How easy** it is for God's people to become **accustomed** to the **customary** – or to the **mediocre**.
1. I am not trying to be mean; I'm just stating a fact.
 2. How many hundreds of times did you – and I – walk through the front doors of our church and not notice – or not care – that they were getting dull and drab?
 3. It took leadership for someone to say, **"This is easy to fix, let's fix it,"** and that is what they did.
 4. It takes leadership to start a home Bible study, or a visitation program, or some sort of advertizing program.
 5. One of the hindrances to rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem had been a **lack of leadership**.
 6. But God raised up Nehemiah, and that was corrected. With him came resources and supplies.
- C. A corollary to that point is the existence of **common distractions**. Distractions become hindrances.
1. It is not natural for the flesh to stay focused on **"things above,"** on God's will; on the return of the Saviour.
 2. It is not normal for the flesh to say, **"Hey, let's build a wall for the glory of the Lord."**
 3. We may train our hearts to say when we wake up, **"This could be the day of the Lord's return."**
 - a. But by the time breakfast is over, our minds are turning to all of the responsibilities of the day.
 - b. Rarely do we consider this subject again until bed time, when we say, **"Oh it wasn't today."**
 4. That thorn in the flesh doesn't very often make us say,
 - a. **"Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."**
 - b. Rather we start reaching for the pain reliever or the tweezers.
 5. We all have undeniable, daily responsibilities which are not spiritual in themselves.
 6. And we have aging and tiring bodies which demand rest more than hauling rock and mortar.
- D. Then come **the enemy** with their threats and attacks.
1. **"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?"**
 2. And the heathen **"conspired all of them together to come and to fight against Jerusalem and to hinder it."**
 3. **Verse 12** expresses the fear that the average Jerusalemite had at the time.
 4. **"And it came to pass, that when the Jews which dwelt by them came, they said unto us ten times, From all places whence ye shall return unto us they will be upon you."**
 - a. **"Ten times"** means frequently the enemy came with their threats and warnings, and frequently the Jews reported their threats to their leaders.
 - b. The enemy came from different places, different people at different times – Tobiah, Geshem, and others – with their dire threats.

- c. They were saying, *“If you don’t stop this foolish building project and return to us and to the way things were before, you’ll be slaughtered.”*
 - 5. The constant barrage of negativity was taking its toll on the people.
 - 6. This current pandemic hysteria, shows how easy it is for people to fall under constant negative information.
- E. As a result, one of the hindrances to the work was the **discouraged** and **fearful hearts** of the people.
- 1. Thankfully, the Lord gave Nehemiah encouragement, and he shared that with others.
 - 2. He and the men of the city sat down and came up with a plan of self-defense.
 - 3. *“Therefore set I in the lower places behind the wall, and on the higher places, I even set the people after their families with their swords, their spears, and their bows.*
 - a. *And I looked, and rose up, and said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, Be not ye afraid of them: remember the Lord, which is great and terrible, and fight for your brethren, your sons, and your daughters, your wives, and your houses.*
 - b. *And it came to pass, when our enemies heard that it was known unto us, and God had brought their counsel to nought, that we returned all of us to the wall, every one unto his work.*
 - c. *And it came to pass from that time forth, that the half of my servants wrought in the work, and the other half of them held both the spears, the shields, and the bows, and the habergeons; and the rulers were behind all the house of Judah.*
 - d. *They which builded on the wall, and they that bare burdens, with those that laded, every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon.*
 - e. *For the builders, every one had his sword girded by his side, and so builded. “*
 - 4. They also had a signaling system, so that if the enemy attacked at one spot, a trumpeter could call warriors to that spot from other parts of the city.
 - 5. Apparently, just having those defenses in place was enough to encourage the people to move forward.
 - 6. And like so much of what **we** are enduring today, the threats were not much more than loud noise.

III. Beyond these things, the hindrance upon I’d like to focus for a few minutes is the rubbish.

- A. Nehemiah encountered it on his night-time survey. Sanballat spoke of it.
- 1. And some of the people had so much of it in their work zone, they couldn’t build.
 - 2. *“And Judah said, The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and there is **MUCH rubbish**; so that we are not able to build the wall.”*
- B. Here is the reality – there is always going to be rubbish; I think we can say that it’s a part of the curse of sin.
- 1. Things naturally deteriorate – axe heads to axe handles – for different reasons.
 - 2. Cars get old and difficult to maintain, and so do human bodies.
 - 3. The reason the church front door was in disrepair was due to the blistering of the sun and natural oxidation.
 - 4. Fences need to be painted and painted again.
 - 5. The walls of Jerusalem had been in the process of dying long before the Babylonians came to town.
 - 6. The mortar deteriorated, the weather chiseled on the stones, animals dug into the foundation.
 - 7. And **II Kings 25:10** specifically says, *“All the army of the Chaldees ... brake down the walls of Jerusalem round about.”* The Babylonians deliberately pulled down the glorious walls of the Holy City.
 - 8. I can’t see how the stone walls were actually set on fire, but clearly the massive wooden gates were set ablaze and the soot, ashes and burned out timbers were just left where they fell.
- C. As a result there was all that rubbish around the city where the reconstruction needed to take place.
- 1. There was dust from the mortar – and singed and weakened timbers – and stones of various dimensions – from the size of a man’s fist to hundred pound boulders.
 - 2. At first, it would all have to be moved back out of the way to get to the original foundation, if there was one.
 - 3. And then what could be salvaged from the rubble had to be sufficiently cleaned up.
 - 4. Rubbish was a part of the renovation and it is always a part of construction.

- D. Back to us.... what should be our primary work as the people of God?
1. Some would say it is to glorify the Lord; to praise and worship His dear name. That is not incorrect.
 2. Others might say that our primary work is contained in the great commission: *“Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.”* That is true as well.
 3. Have you ever considered how much rubbish there is hindering the progress of the Lord’s church?
 4. Wouldn’t it be wonderful if there were no hindrances in carrying out these two responsibilities?
- E. Satan has been trying to tear down the walls and heap rubbish before God’s servants for centuries.
1. Early on he ripped down the part of the wall which said, *“Baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost.”*
 2. He trashed the word *“baptize”* until people were picturing sprinkling instead of immersion.
 3. And then he badgered foolish people into thinking that baptism washes away sins.
 4. Now, before we can preach **Acts 2:38**, we have to clean away the rubbish – *“Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”*
 5. If there weren’t so many incorrect preconceived ideas, the work of the Lord would be far more simple.
- F. At some point, along came the philosophic Sanballats telling people that sin is not sin, and the only punishment for our deeds is what a person’s conscience lets him believe.
1. Now, in preaching the gospel, every message has to try to convince the proud and self-satisfied sinner that he **IS** a sinner and there is eternal punishment for sin.
 2. The Moabites of sensualism and hedonism are tearing down the walls of morality – and in the process the principles of truth and honesty.
 3. Without Biblical and spiritual walls there is no such thing as right and wrong. There is no accountability.
 4. Back in the 18th century Satan sent the Sanballat and Tobiah of Westcott and Hort, to pull down the walls of the Word God.
 5. And then in stepped pseudo-scientists insisting, without proof, that man evolved from nothing – into the ape he is today.
 - a. In the process of that destruction, the heart of the Bible was ripped out – the foundation of the wall was destroyed.
 - b. Without a Creator, man has no one to whom he is accountable – there is no final judge.
 - c. And there is no need of salvation.
- G. Everywhere we look there is doctrinal rubbish in our way.
1. We have to have an official Statement of Faith, because we need a wall in the midst of all the rubbish.
 2. What is a *“church”*? There are several religious definitions, but only one is Biblical and correct.
 - a. It shouldn’t be necessary for us to roll away the boulders of the false church, but, sadly, we must.
 - b. 90%, 95% of all churches and professing Christians are tripping over that rubbish.
 3. Is the Lord physically coming back to earth again? Yes, He is.
 4. But the theological landscape is covered with Eschatological debris, and sadly, we have to deal with it.
- H. And of course there is the huge question of salvation. What must I do to be saved?
1. For some, going to church is sufficient. What a boulder that is to trip over.
 2. For others it’s a matter of balance – one’s good deeds outweighing the bad ones.
 3. Baptism is said to save some people, while communion adds to that salvation.
 4. How many roads are there to Heaven?
 5. Many people think that everyone eventually makes it to godhood.
 6. In reality, there is only one road to God and forgiveness, but not if you check the internet.
 7. There is rubbish at every turn, and sadly God’s churches have to deal with it before we can actually build on the truth.

- I. There is social garbage and political garbage as well.
 1. Thankfully, the Idaho government isn't telling us that we have to wear masks to worship the Lord, but that is taking place in some places. Some of God's churches have to deal with that garbage.
 2. There was a man from Washington all excited to hear that we were maskless; he said he was on his way.
 - a. I made the mistake of saying we had plenty of room to "*social distance*" if necessary.
 - b. That may have been enough for him to think we have bruised our knees on today's hysterics.
 - c. It is sad, but we have to deal with this kind of rubbish.
 3. Society tries to tell us that we can't speak out about homosexuality or capital punishment – those are huge rubbish piles.
 4. We are not going to trip over this rubbish or that which hinders us from condemning abortion & euthanasia.
- J. Wouldn't the work and service of God be easier, if there wasn't so much rubbish in the way?
 1. Wouldn't it be wonderful if we could simply drive up to the Spokane Reservation and preach Christ and the people there understand that the Bible is true and that they are sinners?
 2. The reality is that in some cases we have to deal with the problems of the native religion first.
 3. Wouldn't it be wonderful if people's skin color wasn't the issue that society has made it to be, keeping a man of one race from listening to the gospel preached by a man of another race?
 4. God's wall is relatively simple, but society has tried to bury it in rubbish.
 5. The problem of the ministry is all the man-made and Satanic rubbish standing in the way

IV. Of course, the rubbish needs to be removed – that is just the way it is.

- A. It needs to be removed for the sake of **progress**.
 1. The work of the Lord cannot go forward if the place surveyed for the wall is clogged with garbage.
 2. Yes, rubbish will always be a part of our lives.
 3. But if the Lord's church has to constantly fight with major trash problems, it may not have the energy necessary to carry out its real responsibilities.
- B. The rubbish needs to be removed for **safety's sake**.
 1. Nehemiah made his initial survey on the lip of destruction as he maneuvered his ride between the debris and the valley down below.
 2. And when the work started, I wonder how many builders broke fingers as they pulled 50lb rocks away from the work area.
 3. How many turned an ankle stepping on some of the rubbish from the former wall?
- C. Remember that Nehemiah was concerned about the **glory of God** in the glory of Jerusalem.
 1. Yes, the temple had been rebuilt, but the city was an eye-sore because some of the hovels of the Jew's homes were exposed to the eyes of the mocking heathen.
 2. There was no surrounding wall. Let's build a wall.
 3. And if when that wall was completed there were still tons of rubbish laying about, the glory of the accomplishment would still have been tarnished.
 4. The rubbish needed to be removed for the sake of beauty – for the sake of the Lord's glory.
- D. But again I remind you – our primary interest should not be rubbish per se – or even building walls, or our need of protection or our perceived beauty.
 1. As saints and members of the Lord's church, it is the Lord who should be our focal point.
 2. The wall needs to be built in order to bring the Lord due unto His name.
 3. It is the temple within the walls that should be our primary concern.
 4. But the truth is – the rubbish is there and it demands our attention as well.
 5. We need to regularly police and clean up our spiritual property as we walk each week to the temple of God.