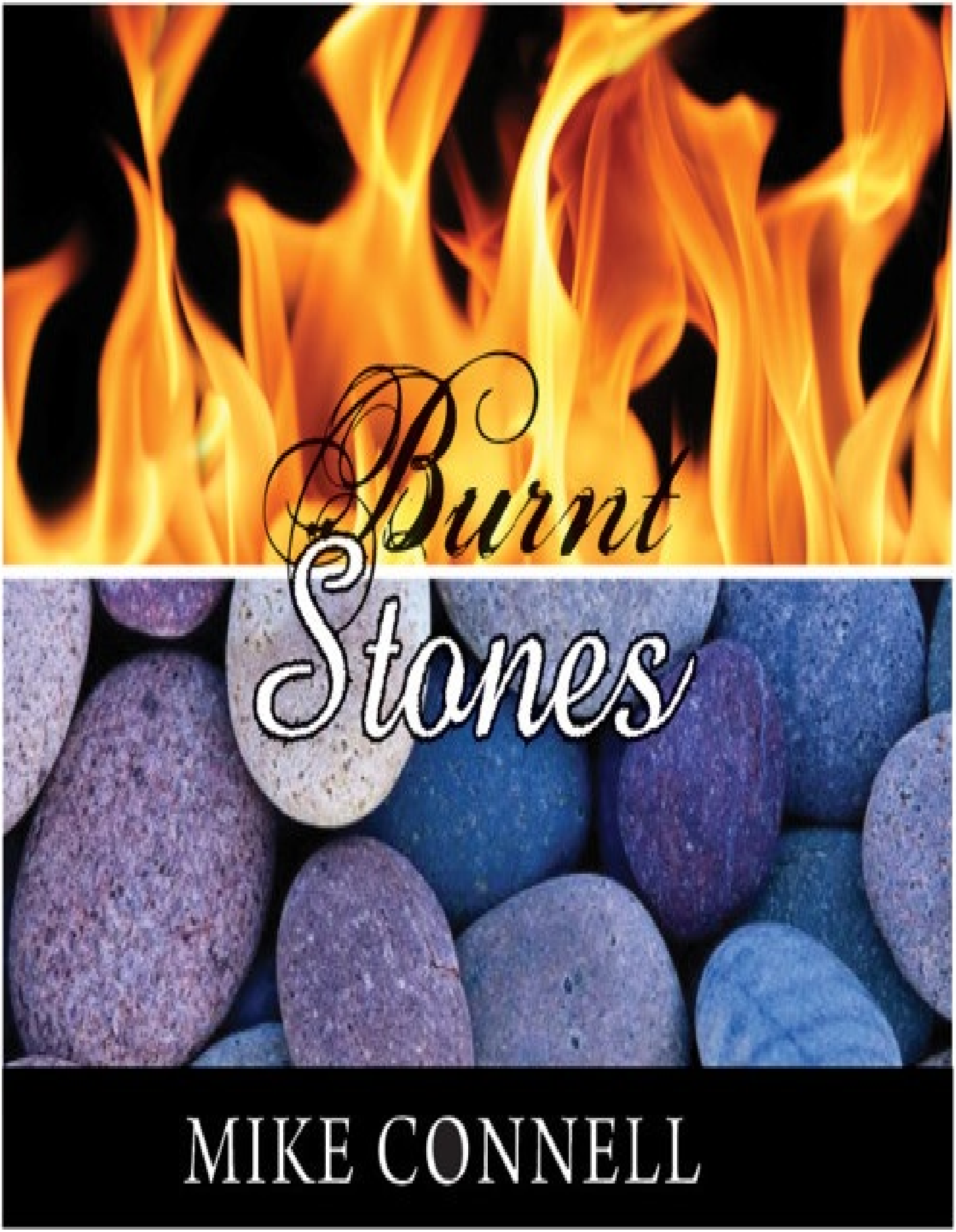

Burnt
Stones
MIKE CONNELL

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Mike Connell

Audio Transcripts of Sunday Sermons

Smashwords Edition
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Burnt Stones

Burnt Stones (1 of 4) Stones are a picture of people. The church in its early days was filled with glory - it changed the Roman Empire, and influenced nations. Then it went through a dark season - but we are in days now when God is rebuilding His church, and the Bible says: the glory of that latter house will be greater than the glory of the former!

An indignant Moabite mocked the Jews, saying: will they offer sacrifices and complete it in a day? Will they revive the stones out of the heaps of rubbish, stones that have been burned in the fire? It's a picture of demonic spirits arrayed against us, arrayed against God's purpose & plan, scorning & belittling you, saying: is it possible for God to raise up people whose lives have been burnt?

Once a stone was burnt and crumbled, it was easy to pull it out of position. If you have ever been burnt by the fires of pain, disappointment, offence, it's very easy for you to be removed out of the wall of destiny, out of where God has positioned you to grow, to be planted, and to become successful in your walk as a Christian. When we walk through a difficult season in our life, it's what the Bible calls a 'fiery trial' - a trial by fire. What is at stake is your destiny, and what's being tested is the quality of your faith in God.

Burnt Stones (2 of 4) There is no believer in Christ who's not called to restore burnt stones. True religion is to visit the widows and the orphans in their affliction, to visit the burnt stones and comfort them. You cannot have a vibrant, vital spirit life and not minister to burnt stones. That is the heart of God - people, ruined cities, burnt stones, devastations of generations. God wants to heal and restore them.

Passionless religion is a curse. It's not Biblical. Conservative, passionless, expressionless religion does not change anything. God wants a fire ignited in our hearts, a fire for the lost, a fire for burnt stones, a fire that's not just come out of human concern and sympathy, a fire that's ignited out of the place of prayer and fasting!

God gives every believer an axe head - it's the anointing of the Holy Ghost. It's

your responsibility not to lose the flow of God's power and presence. It's your responsibility to keep that axe head sharp - to learn to listen, hear, and respond-to to the voice of God, to do the things God's showing you to do, wherever it might be. We're all called to be an axe for Jesus Christ.

Burnt Stones (3 of 4) When Nehemiah looked around and saw the broken lives, it was in his heart not to judge or condemn, but to be part of the answer.

Every believer is called to be a builder, because a true Son is a "builder of the household name". When you catch the heart of the Holy Ghost, something in you will resonate, will feel concern, will rise up on the inside. I want to be a builder for God! I want my life to count for something! Every believer is given spiritual gifts (1 Cor 14:12), but let it be to build up the church - desire to excel in building up people.

Isaiah 61 - "the spirit of the Lord is upon me" - it's all to do something. It's to open blind eyes. It's to heal broken hearts. It's to restore the desolation of previous generations. He wants people who are broken, disconnected and cut down to be restored and lifted up, doing something useful.

Burnt Stones (4 of 4) Notes only (no audio)

Audio

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- Burnt Stones (2 of 4).mp3
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Notes

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Burnt Stones (1 of 4)

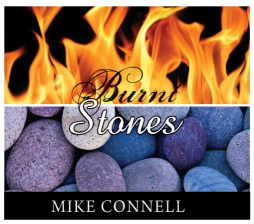
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Stones are a picture of people. The church in its early days was filled with glory - it changed the Roman Empire, and influenced nations. Then it went through a dark season - but we are in days now when God is rebuilding His church, and the Bible says: the glory of that latter house will be greater than the glory of the former!

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Once a stone was burnt and crumbled, it was easy to pull it out of position. If you have ever been burnt by the fires of pain, disappointment, offence, it's very easy for you to be removed out of the wall of destiny, out of where God has positioned you to grow, to be planted, and to become successful in your walk as a Christian. When we walk through a difficult season in our life, it's what the Bible calls a 'fiery trial' - a trial by fire. What is at stake is your destiny, and what's being tested is the quality of your faith in God.



I want you to open it with me in Nehemiah, Chapter 4. I want to speak today on a message called Burnt Stones. I looked in the paper on Saturday night, and I couldn't believe it - that Hettinga Estate on fire. Man, how many saw that fire? Man, what a blaze! Nearly burnt to the ground, and of course, occasionally you have houses catch fire, buildings catch fire. One of the things I've seen, I've been to buildings that have caught fire, and they are burnt out or gutted out, and one of the things that you find often the next day, is you find people walking through the charred ruins, looking for something of value. What hangs over the house is a sense of a dream, or a life, that has been shattered and broken - suddenly, without warning. So a burnt-out building is a horrendous thing. The smoke, the ruins, the water, the ashes, the dust, and then every now

and then, you'll find something that survived the fire, but it's a heartbreaking thing, ever to go to a house that is burnt down.

I want you to see something that really was heartbreaking for God, and it's found in Nehemiah 4, and that's when the city of Jerusalem and the walls were beaten down, broken down, and the city was burnt with fire. Jerusalem in the Bible is a picture of the church of Jesus Christ, and so there's an Old Testament picture, it's a picture of the church once glorious, once invincible, once being the centre of influence in the world, once being the centre of God's glory shining out to touch nations. The Bible says: people came from round the world, Sheba came [Queen of Ethiopia], to see the glory of God in the house of God - the church in that day was a great and a glorious place. Then it fell into ruin, it was overtaken. The armies of its enemies came, it sacked the city, burnt the city out, burnt the walls, tore down the walls, burnt the city, burnt down the temple, plundered the people, killed the people, destroyed the people. It was a horrendous time.

You find in the last part of the Book of Chronicles, where the city was burnt down; but God is always ready to restore! And whatever has happened to people, whatever's happened in our lives, whatever may have happened to the church over the centuries, I tell you something: God is a God who restores and rebuilds! God is a God who puts hope, you can walk through the abandoned tatters of a building that's burnt to the ground, and see nothing of value there, but God is able to build something great upon those ruins. I tell you something, the church in its early days was filled with glory. It changed the Roman Empire. It influenced nations. Then it went through a dark season, but we're in days when God is rebuilding His church, rebuilding His people, and the Bible says: the glory of that latter house will be greater than the glory of the former! [Yeah!] And we are living in such days of rebuilding and restoration! What a challenge to respond to God! In Chapter 4 Verse 1, we're going to pick up where the building has started, and I want to just move through this, and just bring out some things for you, that I felt God put on my heart. I felt very, very deeply touched by the Holy Ghost as I began to study and look into this.

It came to pass that when Sanballat... Sanballat means strength, he was a Moabite. He was an unclean person. He was an enemy of the work of God. When he heard we were rebuilding the wall, he was furious and very indignant, and he mocked the Jews. It's true that the devil continually is indignant, angry, and absolutely furious when we set out heart to build lives, to bring people to

Christ, to see them saved, water baptised, filled with the Holy Ghost, starting to get equipped, trained, restored. The devil gets furious. He gets furious. Notice what it said he did: he mocked the Jews, or he despised, laughed, and he scorned them. One of the strategies of the enemies, that comes against every person, is he will belittle, despise, and scorn you, as being of no value whatsoever. It says: he spoke before his brethren, and the army of Samaria, and said: what are these feeble Jews? They're weak! Will they strengthen themselves? No way. Will they offer sacrifices and complete it in a day? Will they call on God? Can God make a difference? And he said: will they complete it in a day? This is where I want to pick this up from. Will they revive the stones out of the heaps of rubbish, stones that have been burned in the fire?

It's a picture here of demonic spirits arrayed against you and I, arrayed against God's purpose and plan, scorning and belittling and saying is it possible for God to raise up people whose lives have been burnt? Their lives are just like: they're a mess, in a rubbish heap, their marriages broken, their lives have failed, they're addicted, they're in a mess. Is it possible for lives like that to be built? Is it possible for God to do something? I don't think so, and they mocked and laughed. Is it possible for people to be discipled and the cities changed, the atmosphere changed, the very nature changed? My, the devil despises you even thinking about it! One of the things that we find, is the devil constantly pressures our mind, to doubt that God can raise someone up that you are praying for, that can raise someone up that may be addicted, they may be in bondage right now. They may be living in sin, they may be in defeat, they may be a hardened person; and you look at them and you think: man oh man, that's hard to get that person saved. It's like you've taken up the mocking of Sanballat in your mind, saying it'll be too difficult for such a person to be saved. It's NOT too hard for the Lord to save! Not too hard for the Lord to save!

It's not too hard for the Lord to save, and revive burnt stones, that were once great stones, part of a mighty city, part of a purpose and a destiny; but now burnt and reduced to ruins, smouldering, charred ruins. God can take a life like that, and make something out of it. That's the God we serve. You've got to believe this. You've got to believe Him, so God uses a picture from the Old Testament, and this picture's a vivid picture, and it's to put into our hearts a hope: that what God could do in the lives of people you know, what God could do in your life. Notice: rubbish, the rubble of a city that was once great; dreams that were once

there, hopes that were once there, now all there is is rubble. You can hardly believe or comprehend the scale of the rubble, when a city's been reduced. If you saw pictures of Berlin after the Second World War, burnt out buildings, great magnificent buildings, reduced to rubble; just rubble, rubble, rubble. You could hardly make your way through it, and so it was with this city here.

So when we're talking about Burnt Stones, what do we mean? In the Bible, the walls and the buildings were made not of wood, they were made of stone. The stone that was used to build the city of Jerusalem had to be quarried. It had to be cut out, it had to be shaped, and then it had to be fitted. They were great stones, the Bible tells us; so when they built the wall, they had to cut out limestone, they had to pull it and drag it together, and they had to piece each part, every part fitted perfectly. So when limestone is burnt by fire, it begins to become crumbly and powdered. Then it's very easy to break down the walls, and break down the buildings. You wonder how great buildings can be broken down; very simply they just burn them, and then the stone starts to crumble, and then they can smash them down - just use great poles, and they push and lever, and smash them down. So when Jerusalem was overtaken by its enemies from Babylon, what they did was they burnt the city. They just burnt the city from one end to the other, burnt the house of God, killed people. There was blood from one end of the city to the other. They set it on fire, and then they set about destroying the city, so it could never become great, ever again.

What a picture for us, of how the devil desires to destroy the church of Jesus Christ, to burn out everything you and I try and build that's good and right and holy, or would leave a legacy; and to raze it to the ground, so all that you see is rubble. And so that was what it was like, and the burnt stones were easily removed from their positions. Once a stone was burnt and crumbled, it was easy to pull it out of position, easy to remove it from the wall of destiny. If you have ever been burnt by the fires of pain, disappointment, offence, it's very easy for you to be removed out of the wall of destiny, out of where God has positioned you to grow, to be planted, and to become successful in your walk as a Christian. So stones are always a picture of people.

Let's read a verse in 1 Peter 2:4-5. It says Verse 4: coming to Jesus, who is a living stone; rejected by men, but chosen by God, and precious; but you also as living stones are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. So if we can just pick up this,

God uses pictures to describe people, so He says you are a living stone, not a dead old stone. You may have been that way before you come to Christ. We were dead in sin, stony hearted, hard hearted, insensitive, unloving, self-centred; and when we come to Christ, the spirit of God comes in us, and we become living, alive and vibrant; the Holy Ghost is in us, and God wants to build us up, to build us, shape our lives, and fit us together to become a great house of God. Notice what it says, if we look in Ephesians 2:20. Ephesians 2 picks up the same picture in Verse 20. It says in verse 19: now you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but you're fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being brought carefully together, grows into a holy temple. You also are being built together for a dwelling place in the Holy Ghost.

So you notice that God calls us a living stone, and He desires to shape our life. The shaping of your life is called discipleship. It's called the forming of your attitudes and your lifestyle, so you become possible to be used by God in a great way, and God doesn't just leave us as individual stones. In the Bible, Christianity is about a body of people, it's not just about individual lives and destinies. It's about God working through a body of people, so He builds us together. One of the surest ways to recognise we're quite dysfunctional, is our inability, or reluctance, or resistance, to forming close relationships. Close relationships help us sort out the rough edges on our lives. Close relationships are part of what God wants us to do. Many people in church find themselves quite lonely. I want to just put it to you, to think about what a possible reason is, that perhaps you've got a lot of rough edges on you, and you have not developed the skills, nor the commitment, to build successful relationships. It takes effort, and it takes skill. They don't just happen.

That's why God uses the picture of a building. You don't just throw some stones together and have a building; you carefully shape the stones, carefully insert them, and then lock them or cement them together - a picture of us standing together in committed relationships. You can't have Christianity as being a McChurch, you walk in, walk out, have a meal and go. That is not church. It's not church. It's just a modern version of non-committed relationships; God wants to locate us. So when the Bible talks about positioning, and being positioned, God's talking about your physical location, He's talking about your connection in

relationships, and He's talking about your mind set, being positioned or having a certain attitude, way of thinking. So let's follow this thought there with these stones. Notice what the challenge is. He said: will they revive the stones? Is there any chance of restoring stones that got burnt? Well you know the houses that formed a great building of a city, all of these stones, now they're all burnt. I want you just to try and picture just a place full of rubble. You can't recognise the streets any more, the buildings are all broken down. The walls, great stones charred, broken, stones fractured. If you've ever been to the ruins in Pompei, you can see there houses which were once great houses. Now they're shattered, broken down, stones are broken, columns are broken down, nothing like its intended or former glory.

So how is it that we become a burnt stone? How do we become a burnt stone? There's probably four reasons, or four ways that I've considered, that you and I can become a burnt stone. One of the greatest pressures that I have had personally in my Christian life, it's the pressure to let go being positioned where God wants me to be. It's the pressure to let go the commitments I've made to the Lord. It's the pressure to withdraw, in the heat of battle, from that which God called me to live out, and to do. That has been, of all the things, the greatest pressure; and the pressure comes the most when you get burnt in a fire. Fires happen. Some fires are ordained by God, some fires are lit by other people, some fires are lit by the devil, but fires are inevitable in life. We will all have fiery experiences; so the Bible talks about the fiery testing of your faith, so when we walk through a difficult season in our life, it's what the Bible calls a 'fiery trial', or a trial by fire. What is at stake? What is at stake is your destiny, and what's being tested is the quality of your faith in God.

If you think about the difficulties we had we talked about in the wilderness journeys, here's what you would have remembered: that each one of those difficulties, was to bring them to growth in their faith - except they didn't handle it right, and in the end, they totally lost their positioning, and never ended up in the promised land - another generation did. And so what causes this? Well there's a number of things can cause you to get burnt, and when you get burnt, there's a tendency to want to withdraw from the place, or the relationships, or the mentality, or commitments, that God has called you to hold to. You think about a marriage going through pain and difficulty. Why do people quit? Well they quit because they got burnt, they lost hope, and then they get levered out of position.

That couple that once stood at the front, and made a commitment for life together, for better or for worse; now find themselves burnt stones, and their marriage is burnt as well. What happened? They got burnt in the fire and in the heat of the fire began to crumble, and then were levered out of a commitment they once made. That's what it is, that's what burnt stones look like, not very nice.

I'm going to give you some examples of burnt stones that God restored in a moment, so here's some of the things that burn you, and then lever you out of position, not necessarily in order of importance. One of them is actually spiritual pressure, and spiritual conflict. The Bible says: we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers. The world of the spirit, the realm of the spirit is real. You're either going to win in this dimension, and walk in the spirit; or you will get knocked around. We're a spirit church, so we engage levels of things in the atmosphere, that others perhaps don't. That's why, when I send people out of here, they just go to places and demons fly out of people everywhere. Why? Because in this location, we've learnt how to stand up, and to build an atmosphere, and to build a strength of spirit, that enables us to displace demonic spirits, at a certain level. But you come under pressure, and in my time as a pastor over the years, I've had seasons where there's been immense spiritual pressure, attacks by what are called witchcraft spirits.

I don't blame the demons, I just understand, that when you go through a season of witchcraft attack, it knocks you around. It affects you with fear, it affects you with grief, it affects you with confusion, affects you with uncertainty and discouragement. Elijah got burnt by that thing. In 1 Kings 19, Elijah got burnt when he got attacked by one of those spirits that came against him. It came against him from Jezebel. She sent these messengers against him, and he got burnt, and he lost his positioning in the spirit to lead a nation into victory. Now the Bible is full of these stories if you know how to look at them, so a burnt stone remember, a stone is a person. A burnt stone is someone who's been through a fiery painful experience, and then they've crumbled, and become dislodged from what God called them to be part of, and to do. So one of the things is spiritual conflict and pressure. We become weakened, and burnt, and then withdraw.

A second thing is painful experiences in relationship in life. Now relationships aren't all smooth. I don't think anyone would doubt that. You think you're going

on a great thing, and then suddenly all these problems come, and difficulties come, you never expected before. Relationships don't always go smoothly. Relationships have conflicts; conflicts are a part of life. If you don't understand how to deal with, and handle the conflicts, deal with communication, learn how to communicate properly, you will get burnt in the relationship. People come into church with this idealistic view, that everyone here's perfect, and it's going to be heaven on earth. It isn't heaven on earth, if you haven't found out. Heaven is up there you know? When we die we go to heaven. Here we have people, and people are very irritating! You being one of them, and I being another! And so we have difficulties. Now in the midst of our relational difficulties, we can get burnt. You can be hurt when people betray you. You share a confidence, and someone gives it up - it's a burning experience. If someone offends you, it can be an experience where you get burnt by that offence. Someone you thought was your friend, walks out and leaves you, you get burnt by the experience.

So there are many situations in life which can burn us, situations of grief and loss, betrayal, people judge us. There are many experiences where you can get burnt. Here's the thing: if you don't deal with getting burnt, what will happen is, you'll crumple, and then get dislodged out of what God called you to be and to do. This is where the dilemma lies, and I've seen over the years, hundreds of Christians dislodged when they got burnt; so God's got a plan for burnt stones. His plan is to revive them, and restore them, get them back in position again.

Okay, a third way is through broken promises and dreams, when our dreams are shattered. Now there's many reasons that that may happen. It could be just simply that we were believing God for something, like a healing, and it didn't happen; we believe in God for a marriage, and it still broke down; we believe in God for a child ,and they got worse, their situation got worse. Broken dreams, where God doesn't come through the way we expect Him to, can be a cause of many believers getting burnt. They get offended, and an offended person is a burnt stone. An offended believer is a burnt stone, blackened and charred by the experience they've been through, crumbling, and about to be dislodged.

So these are some of the things, and sometimes God has a good idea of just allowing us to go through a fire. Have a think about Job - where did the idea come from to let Job go through a bit of a fire? Well Job went through a fire, but at the end of it he came out, and he came to twice the blessing - he came to an expanded positioning. He came to twice the blessing he had before, because he

handled the fire right. Think about Joseph. Joseph went through a fiery trial. He went through a betrayal by his brothers, he went through imprisonment, he went through false accusations and judgements against him. He went through a season of delay, when God didn't answer his prayers. He went through a whole range of things, but when he came out, he came out and was positioned, and he wasn't a burnt stone. He was a living stone. He was a living stone, because in the middle of it all, the Bible says in Psalm 106:19, it tells us: the word of the Lord tried him, until the time for all the promise for be fulfilled, and then that word released him into his promise. So he never let go of his trust in God, no matter what external circumstances. He never allowed what was around him, to scorch him and burn him. He never held offence, never held bitterness, never held judgement, never held things that would hold him back. So when he came out he was able to say to his brothers: it wasn't you sent me there, it was God sent me there. Don't blame yourselves. His heart was expanded by his fiery experience. He was not a burnt stone at all!

So let's go back into Nehemiah. I want you to have a look in Nehemiah, Chapter 1. I want to share with you something there about God's heart for burnt stones, because right now, you might be a burnt stone yourself. I was thinking God, is that me, a burnt stone? I'm thinking: flip, I can smell smoke. That's not me! We always think it's the other person that's burning don't we? Turns out it was us! Nehemiah 1:3, he got a message. Nehemiah got a message, and it said that we're in distress and reproach, Verse 3. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, the gates burned with fire. When I heard these words, I sat down, wept and mourned for many days, and I was fasting and praying before the God of heaven. So notice here, Nehemiah means: Comfort of God. Nehemiah is a picture of the Holy Spirit, and Nehemiah has a burden, when he hears there's burnt stones and broken walls. The heart of God is to restore. God sees what you could be. He sees the possibility in a burnt stone. Someone else sees just a drug addict, someone else sees just a prostitute, someone said: it's a no-hoper. God says: I just see a burnt stone, and I can fix up the burnt stone. I can put it back into the wall of destiny, and I can give it significance and purpose! God is like that, so Nehemiah, who is a picture of the Holy Spirit, who carries the heart of God, grieved - grieved over burnt stones.

When we get burnt, displaced, shifted out of our function, cast aside and we feel like our life is just a pile of rubble - God grieves, because He has a destiny, a

plan. He has somewhere He wants to get us. He wants to restore us! He wants to reposition us, so we're back in the wall of destiny, we're doing what God called us to do. Well God can do it. He never abandons burnt stones. Christians often do, but God never does. He never does, never. I've watched over many years, doesn't matter what happened to people, I watched God pursue them. The Holy Ghost grieves over the burnt stones; so look in Chapter 2:17. Nehemiah's gone and had a look at all the damage. He's seen the walls, and everything's broken down, the stones; then he gets everyone together and he says to them, in Verse 17: you see the distress we're in, how Jerusalem lies waste, it's gates are burnt with fire. Now come, and let us build the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no longer a reproach. And I told them of the hand of my God, which had been good upon me; also the king's words, which he had spoken to me. And they said: let us rise up and build, and sent their hands to this good work. Wow, fantastic!

What does the Holy Ghost do? The Holy Ghost helps us get up. Notice what he says. He has a look at it, and he says: you can see it's a mess. You can see that life is broken down. You can see the church isn't what it should be. You can see faults, breaches, gaps, burnt stones everywhere, but he said: Let us rise up and build! The Holy Ghost, I love Him. This is what the Holy Ghost does. He helps us get up. He rebuilds our dreams and puts us where we can be successful. That's what He does - He inspires hope! He said: you see what it's like? Come on, let's build it again. Let's get this thing back up again! Let's get the stones restored and in place.

The second thing you notice that he does, he tells them, with a hand of God on him, draws attention to the hand of God, and the words of the king. He draws attention to the word of God, and the power of God, which are able to change our lives. The word, and the power of God; the power of the Holy Ghost, and the word of God. They're able to rebuild you. They're able to restore you. You need both.

You need the power of the Holy Ghost, that person-presence of the Holy Ghost, coming upon you, touching and restoring your life. You need the word of God, come in and rebuild, strengthen, lift you up again. It's how your life gets build. Finances may be a mess, you may be a burnt stone, creditors are coming in like hungry wolves. God is able to rebuild, He's able to get you out of that place. The cross is about forgiving debts. It's about getting out of debt, getting to a place of prospering. That's what God wants to do - so how does God do it? Notice the

desire of God to do it, but how does God do it? Let me just give you some quick keys, and I want to give you a name of a person associated with each key. Number one: you have to want to be restored, if you're a burnt stone. If you've been burnt by life, burnt by circumstances, hurt, disappointed, let down, betrayed, felt man, that's bad, boy I'm really burnt - you can smell the smoke in your life. You know you're not functioning right, you're not connecting with God right, not connecting with His people right, you're not functioning where you ought to; and you know I am a burnt stone! Listen, God wants to get you back up again, get you going again, get you into the right place, right positioning, right - he wants you to fulfil your destiny. What do you have to do? You've got to want to change. You've got to want to come back to God. You've got to want to. You've got to want to. You've got to want to.

Jesus said to the man: what do you want? I want to be healed! Okay, we can do that... A good example of that is Naomi, in the Book of Ruth. In the Book of Ruth, Naomi in a time of famine, when there was a time of lack - you can have natural famines, spiritual famines, it's a time of lack, when it feels like there's no resources, you're drying up, you're dying; and you think: if I stay here, I'm going to die. So in the time of famine, what Naomi and her husband and family did, they went out, and they went to Moab, which is a forbidden land. It's a picture of a believer in a time of stress, struggle, difficulty, pressure, lack - and they walk away from God, the position God had for them, the place God had for them. They walk away into an unclean place. If you see what happened to them, it was disaster for them. She came back - no, she woke up one day; I've lost my husband, I've lost my sons, I've lost my future, I've lost my support, I have lost everything. She's a burnt stone. She says: don't call me Naomi, call me Mara, bitter. I'm a bitter, burnt stone.

But you know what she did? She heard that God was moving back in the land, and she said: I'm going to position myself back where God is moving. I'm going to get myself under the flow of the Holy Ghost again! I'm going to get myself where God is moving. Why? Because I'm hoping, believing, that God can do something for me. She was a burnt stone, that was restored when she made a decision: I want to be restored! Second, you have to face the reality, and take responsibility, of where you are. That's a hard one - its easy to come up in altar call and get someone to pray for you, but actually, that doesn't really do the job - I wish it did. If your finances are a mess, coming laying hands on you isn't going

to fix them up. See, people look for quick fixes. God isn't a God of quick fixes; He's a God of process, and encounter, together. Encounters start to shift our internal - they impart to us, and prepare us, and empower us, to begin to embrace process of change.

The process is what takes place; so you notice here with David - a good example is David in 2 Samuel 12:13, and David got weary in the battle. The Bible says: when he should have been out fighting a battle, he stayed at home; so instead of being in the battle ground, he was in the bedroom. Instead of being out at war, he was watching the girl in the nude. He was in the wrong place, at the wrong time. He was not doing - notice this - he was out of position. He was called to war, and he wasn't fighting. He was resting, and that's when he got into trouble. He nearly lost his destiny, it cost his family, it cost hundreds of people, cost some of his best men their life, and it cost him years of suffering and sorrow. He became a burnt stone; but when God put His finger on it, he said: I have sinned! I've done wrong before the Lord! He was just straight up, took full responsibility, and embraced fully the hand of God in restoring him.

So it's important if you're a burnt stone, one, that you must want to be restored, and make your way back to God; two, you take full responsibility for reasons for which you are a burnt stone. If you've got unforgiveness in your heart, then you're a burnt stone. That's your unforgiveness. Got bitterness in your heart - you're a burnt stone, it's your bitterness. You've got to take full responsibility, got to actually own the stuff. We've got negative attitudes, they're our negative attitudes. We've got to actually own what we've got, bring it to the Lord, repent of it, and position ourself for God to shift us. He faced reality. He was burnt by sin, and he repented of his sin.

Third thing you must do is: receive healing, and the restoration process of the Holy Ghost. We must welcome the restoring process, and healing power, of the Holy Ghost. We have to welcome it. See, it doesn't just happen. If it just happened, you'd be right now. You've actually got to welcome the Holy Spirit Himself, and the process. A great example of this is Peter, and we find in John 21:15, remember Peter? David's problem was just being weary of fighting, and he just wanted a rest; but Peter's problem was different. Peter's problem was pride, self confidence, trying to put a good show on for everyone else. He was confident in himself, over-confident, and then the pressure came on him, and he ran. He ran and he left Jesus. He left His side, broke his own word, broke his

own promises, his own commitments; and he wept bitterly over his failure, his personal failure.

You know what? When Jesus saw him, Jesus invited him to a meal, and then just restored him. He said: Peter, do you love Me? Do you love Me? And he wrestled with it quite a bit, but he had to open his heart to receive the loving, restoring presence of God back into his life again. Sometimes when we've broken our lives, or damaged our lives, or we've failed, sometimes the hard thing to do, is just to be open to be loved again, and he let God love him again. Love binds up the broken heart. He let Jesus love him, restore him again, and Jesus began to reposition him. He said: I know you've blown it, I know you've really messed up. I know you had a big mouth, and you haven't lived up to what you said. I know you've really blown it, but you know what? I've really been praying for you, that even when you were burnt in the fire, that you'd be converted; and when you got repositioned again, that you'd strengthen everyone else; so I was watching you even through that burnt fire experience, and I've got My hand on you. The hardest thing for him to do, was to just let Jesus love him.

You know it's important we receive love. Now sometimes the love of God comes through encounter, sometimes it comes in our devotions, but you know when it many times it comes? Many times it comes through people; and you know, if we won't open our lives to people, it's hard to be restored, hard to be healed, because let me say this: if you're a stone that's burnt, and been pulled out of position, God wants you not just to get healed; He wants you back in position, relating and connected, and sometimes we need people to come around us and love us. I know in the Restoration Retreats and many encounter meetings I've had, that one of the greatest healing things, was just to put arms around someone, and love them; and just say: we love you, no matter what. We know what you've done, we know what's been going on, we love you anyway. That is such a healing thing, to come through people.

And finally, we must choose to be repositioned. A classic example of that's in 2 Timothy 4:11 with Mark. Mark was a young apostle of Jesus Christ. Mark went on a mission trip with Paul, and in the middle of the trip, it got too much for him - the conflict, the spiritual pressure, and he quit. He just gave up, because it was too hard; and Paul later on said: listen, he's just a loser, just cut him lose. We're not having him in the team. Barnabas got alongside him, and encouraged him, and finally there came a point where Paul was able to say: I want him back in

my team. Now you imagine how difficult that was for Mark, having walked away from an apostolic ministry, to actually then come back to say: I'm sorry; and to commit himself to walk in that difficult path with Paul again, knowing that there was hardship, difficulties, all kinds of stresses, being committed to the cause of the gospel. So you notice the four steps in the process, or four key things in the restoring of a burnt stone.

Number one, we've got to want to be restored, not to stay a burnt stone in a pile of rubble, which once was our dreams. The second thing is: we must be willing to acknowledge our part in being burnt, and what we need to face in order to come out of that place, and be repositioned. Thirdly, we must be open to the love of God, through the Holy Spirit and through people, to heal, restore, and bring us back into connection again. Finally, we must be willing to commit to actually being repositioned in what God called us to be positioned in. For some that will mean shifts. For some it will mean the role you play. For some it will mean relationships being restored. It means different things for different people, but it always means one thing: that God has changed our life, and that we're back again in the wall of destiny, fulfilling our course, and fulfilling our part.

Jesus said: I'm building a church made of living stones. People that were discarded by life, burnt by religion, burnt by failure, burnt by troubles, burnt by disappointments, burnt by every circumstance of life; but I saw what was possible in them, and I'm raising them up, to become an army to change the world! An army to change the world! An army to change the world! An army to change our community.

Why don't we just close our eyes right now. I saw a video clip - I have it, but I won't show it right now, just because of the time - and I was stunned. There was a man who lost his leg as a child, and a woman who lost her arm in a car accident; and together, together they flowed as a team to do ballet. Isn't that amazing? They overcame the circumstance that burnt them, and began to flow together.

[Prelude] Visit with Pastor Kong Hee, Singapore.

Thank you for your prayers the last two weeks. The first week we were in a church in Singapore. They're going through a huge transition and change in the church, and the pastor was away on stress leave, but however we had a

wonderful time with them all. God moved powerfully. It was a great time, and we were able to help them. The second week we went to City Harvest. City Harvest is also going through a very difficult time. Their pastor's having stress leave too, in some respects, forced stress leave! What's happened is, in the last few years they've been saving and believing God for a big facility in the centre of the city, been meeting right out at the airport, huge convention centre out there that seats about 8,000 at a time. We've just been recently.

They had a big conference out there, and there were about 40,000 people came to the conference, just amazing the work City Harvest is doing - touching all of Asia really, people from about 30 different nations I think were there. They've recently been able to work with a group of businessmen from the church, to purchase what will be called a landmark building in Singapore. It's an amazing building, a group of four buildings, called Suntec City. It's got a magnificent fountain of life. It's just like a landmark in the city centre, but the moment it was announced they bought it, there have been difficulties ever since; and so there's been tremendous upheaval in the city and the nation, tremendous upheaval in the newspapers, criticism, judgements from left, right and centre all over the place. So they felt in light of the criticism, they would go to the registrar of charities and say: well look, we just want you to understand we're open and accountable about everything we do. They laid out all their books for him to go through. He said: no, it's alright, we're okay with it all.

Then just immediately after the Asia conference, Pastor Kong was sitting with Yonggi Cho [Pastor of very large Korean church], and the authorities came in and detained him, and a whole group of his key leaders and Board members all at the same time - took them away individually, no phone, no lawyer, no contact, and then a constant barrage of accusations, for eight to 14 hours. It's been relentless. It did not stop. Of course the media had a frenzy, and Pastor Kong's had to lie low for the last three weeks or so, out of sight because of the frenzy that's created in the media. Even his associate pastor, the photographers have been coming and getting photos of their kids, anything they can get, to get a photo. So the stress and potential difficulties are immense, so they did ask that we pray for them. I've never seen Pastor Kong under such pressure in my life. I know what he's like, and I know right now he is struggling to believe, in the midst of everything that's risen against him, false accusations, judgements, the scorn of a nation against him, to hold onto God in the middle of it, that God

would be the vindicator and deliverer.

So I encourage you just to think of him and pray for him. We've connected with him over many years, from when they were a church of 300. When I went in there, they used to have the security service in the meetings every Sunday. He'd have to give his newsletter every Sunday, and then he would be called in without a moments warning to answer questions about why he's got so many young people in his church, what's his intention, where's he going. Now they've got about 33,000 people in the church, it's just risen to a whole new level now; and in Singapore it's not fully a democracy like we know it, so legally you're guilty until you prove yourself innocent. So he faces all kinds of potential challenges in the future, and at this stage none of that is certain what's going to happen. It's a matter of standing in prayer and believing God, so he appreciated that I was able to come to exhort the church, exhort the leaders, be there to help people, and also to minister into the Bible school. We had a fantastic time in the Bible school, 700 students. God moved, man it was great. We had a couple of outstanding sessions where, without laying hands on anyone, the presence of God just filled the place, and people began to weep. They just began to weep out loud, as they got revelation of the cross of Jesus Christ. Then they began to manifest, just coughing going on all over the place, and then just a great move of God to set people free.

We had that twice during the week, once as we brought them to an encounter with the cross, and the last time as we brought them to understand the love of God as a Father, and His willingness and ability to heal the broken heart. Of course we'll do this in the Freedom Retreat coming up soon, and I encourage you to come along, if you haven't been to a retreat. I don't know why you'd want to keep your demons, they don't help make life easy, and we do have the retreat for a specific reason. It's because we understand that people who come to Christ have issues and things in their life which need ministry, which need deliverance. A third of Jesus' ministry was deliverance, and so it's a part of submitting ourself to God, as we open our life, to be free of the things that come around our life, to be delivered and to be healed and restored. We have a Restoration Retreat later in the year. I encourage you to open your heart, open your life, rather than stay where you are. We don't want to stay where we are individually, or corporately, so let's make decisions to move in our life.

These Encounter Retreats are powerful points of time to engage God. They

really work the best if you've prayed, fasted, and determined you're going to reach out to God to set you free. However they're not standalone events. They're part of a bigger process, where there is a need for us to walk with God, discipline our life, shape our thinking, change our attitudes, our behaviours and so on. So there's a bigger picture of disciplined life and following Christ and obedience, being connected to people; and there is also an encounter, and I love encounters, so it'll be a great time, great weekend. I know you're going to enjoy yourselves.

Summary Notes

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Introduction:
a) Example of the devastation of a Fire – Hettinga Estate
· Building ravaged by fire, blackened, smoke shared ruins
· People wander through ruins of the building, dream, hoping to find something value
b) Bible Example of Jerusalem
Neh 4:1-3
“Will they revive the stones from the heaps of rubbish, stones that are burned?”
· Intense opposition to the work of God.
· The Jews were mocked, despised, laughed and scolded
· Bitter hate and ridicule of the people, God and of the building materials
· Picture of demonic spirits arrayed against the people, the work of God, His purpose and plan
· Is it possible to make a difference? It is not ‘too hard’ for the Lord to save and revive burnt stones
· “Revive” =2421 = to bring back to life, restore strength
· “Rubbish” = 6038 = rubble of a destroyed city, worthless material discarded
· God is always ready to restore and to rebuild, also His Church.
· What a great thing to respond to God?

What is a Burnt Stone?
a) Buildings in the Old Testament
· Walls and buildings were made of great shaped stones – limestone blocks
· When limestone is burnt by fire it gets softened, loses strength and vitality and begins to crumble to powder
· Burnt stones are easily removed from their position, alignment and cast aside as worthless

b) Stones are Pictures of People
1 Pet 2:4-5
“You also as living stones are being up a spiritual house…”
· Believers are living stones – quarried and shaped by God for a purpose
· “Stone” = root 1129 = to build, establish
· Eph 2:20-22
“You are also being built together for a dwelling place of God”
· God shapes us and positions us for His purpose to be fulfilled
· “Position” = place, location, an attitude, way of thinking
i. Where God locates, plants, connects you
ii. Way of thinking, mindset
· God calls us a living stone, desired to shape and position us. Building us together.

c) Stones can become Burnt
Neh 4:2
“Will they revive the stones from the heaps of rubbish, stones that are burned?”
· These stones once formed part of a great building of God
· Now they are burned - softened, blackened, charred, lost vitality and strength
· They had been burned by fire and broken down by the enemy
· How do stones become burnt? The believer goes through painful experiences

i) Spiritual Conflict and Pressure
· People attacked by wicked spirits = offended, angry, hurt, weakened
· People become weakened, burnt
· Kings 19 - Elijah got burnt and lost his position in the Nation
ii) Painful Experiences in Relationships and Life
· Betrayal, judgments, conflict
· People become burnt by grief, disappointment, offence
· God becomes dislodged by people getting burnt
iii) Broken promises and Dreams
· Unexpected loss of a dream or hope
· Dreams you had in your mind and 'not seeing' it come to pass
iv) Refining by God
· Painful experiences in life that God permits to develop our character or faith
· Josephs' experience: betrayal, slavery, false accusations, prison
· God restored the burnt stone and positioned him in a place of honor
· He kept faith during the fire Ps 106:19

3. Can God Restore Burnt Stones?
Neh 1:3-4
"I sat down and wept and mourned for many days"
· "Nehemiah" = Comfort of God = picture of the Holy Spirit
· God does not abandon burnt stones. The heart of God is to restore
· God sees possibilities in stones burnt, charred, disfigured by pain, failure and disappointment
· God grieves if we get displaced
· God can restore a burnt stone and set it back in the wall of destiny and purpose
Neh 2:17
"Come and let us built the wall of Jerusalem"
· Rise up and build – Inspired by the Holy Spirit
i) Holy Spirit inspires fresh hope = He helps us to get up, rebuilding dreams and fulfilling purposes
ii) The Holy Spirit draws our attention to the Word and Power of God
iii) The holy Spirit imparts vision for people to build and restore

4. How Burnt Stones are restored
i) You must want to be Restored
· Ruth 1:6-7 Naomi returned
· Famine – she and her husband left the land of promises, they went to Moab, a forbidden place
· Burnt – suffered grief, loss of husband and both sons
· Must maintain right attitude in famine – believed God, returned to the Lord, her place of destiny

ii) You must Face Reality
· 2 Sam 12:13 David – "I have sinned against the Lord"
· David weary of battle – he left the battlefield for the bedroom, he left the war for watching woman
· David endangered his destiny, family, ministry
· David was burnt by sin – many lost their lives
· He had to face reality take responsibility

iii) You must Receive Healing and restoration of the Holy Spirit
· Welcome the Holy Spirit and the process
· John 21:15 Peter – "Do you love me? Feed my lambs"
· Overconfidence and Pride – Peter fled

· Burnt by failure and broken promises
· He had to receive forgiveness and the love of God
· The love of God may also come through people many times. Relate and commit.

iv) You must Commit to Being Repositioned
· 2 Tim 4:11 Mark – “Take Mark and bring him with you”
· Mark acted in fear – Mark abandoned Paul’s ministry Act 15

Acknowledge your part in being burnt, come back and get repositioned.
God has changed our life; get back into your destiny.
Become and army to change the world

Burnt Stones (2 of 4)

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There is no believer in Christ who's not called to restore burnt stones. True religion is to visit the widows and the orphans in their affliction, to visit the burnt stones and comfort them. You cannot have a vibrant, vital spirit life and not minister to burnt stones. That is the heart of God - people, ruined cities, burnt stones, devastations of generations. God wants to heal and restore them.

Passionless religion is a curse. It's not Biblical. Conservative, passionless, expressionless religion does not change anything. God wants a fire ignited in our hearts, a fire for the lost, a fire for burnt stones, a fire that's not just come out of human concern and sympathy, a fire that's ignited out of the place of prayer and fasting!

God gives every believer an axe head - it's the anointing of the Holy Ghost. It's your responsibility not to lose the flow of God's power and presence. It's your responsibility to keep that axe head sharp - to learn to listen, hear, and respond- to to the voice of God, to do the things God's showing you to do, wherever it might be. We're all called to be an axe for Jesus Christ.



I want to share on burnt stones; Nehemiah 4. And so it happened when Sanballat heard we were rebuilding the wall, he was furious, and very angry, and he mocked the Jews. And then he spoke before his brethren, the army of Samaria, and said: what are these feeble Jews doing? Will they strengthen themselves? Will the offer sacrifices to God? Are they going to complete it in a day? That's too big a task. Will they revive the stones from the heaps of rubbish, stones that are burnt? And so this is a story, or picture, from the days of Nehemiah, when the city of Jerusalem had been overtaken, broken down. The city had been burnt, the people taken out and born into captivity. The city had been destroyed by fire; fire erodes the stones, then they levered them all out. Walls were broken down. It was desolate. It was not a city you could live in any more.

And God intended the city be rebuilt, so here we have a picture; we've got Sanballat, who's a picture of Satan, and Sanballat is mocking the work of God. Sanballat is looking at the city of Jerusalem, he's looking at the plan of God, he's looking at the purpose of God. It is always in the heart of God to go to cities that are ruined. It is always in the heart of God to reach into people whose lives are broken. It is always in the heart of God to build and restore, restore lives, restore marriages, restore families, restore people who've been broken down by the thief that came to destroy. This is the heart of God to restore, and so as Nehemiah arises to go and restore, he faces demonic opposition. The devil doesn't want people restored, he doesn't want your life on course, he doesn't want you fulfilling a purpose and destiny. He wants you to remain in bondage, in defeat with the walls of your life broken down, with your heart full of bitterness and resentment. He wants to come into your life. He wants to burn up everything you have.

But God is able to take burnt stones and raise them up. As we see in this story here, we see the Bible talks about piles of rubbish and burnt stones. Burnt stones are a prophetic picture of people. The Bible uses the word stone to describe people, so a burnt stone is a fire-blackened stone. It is a person who's been through fiery situations, situations of pain, situations of betrayal, situations of injustice; and their life, that once had potential, has now been blackened by the fire that they've gone through. Their heart has changed. Now instead of there being love and kindness, there's anger and hurt and injustice. There's bitterness, there's fear, there's conflict and turmoil. Burnt stones lying in a pile of rubbish, but God has a heart to reach into the piles of rubbish that are in our city, and to find stones and restore them! This is what our God is like. This is why Jesus came into this world. He came into a world full of rubbish, full of burnt stones, that He might raise them up and heal them and restore them, and position them into their place of destiny, and put them in a place they could be useful to God, useful to the purpose of God.

A burnt stone is someone who's saying in their heart: I don't think God could ever use me again. My life is in ruins. I feel stripped of everything. A burnt stone is someone who's been displaced out of the place and call of God. A burnt stone is someone who's saying: I don't think I could ever trust again, I don't think I could ever love again, I don't think I could ever reach out again. I don't think I could ever be used by God again. That's a burnt stone, and God sends Nehemiah

to find the burnt stones, and to pick them up and restore them, and put them back in place. God wants to do it to your life, and to the friends around you, to your family. He wants to do it in our community. Our city is full of burnt stones. You don't have to walk far to see them, lives that have been shattered by abuse and alcohol, and God is wanting to raise them up. God is wanting to restore them, and He uses a man called Nehemiah.

Let's have a look at Nehemiah 1:2. Hanani and my brothers came with the men from Judah, and I asked them concerning the Jews which had escaped, and survived the captivity. They hadn't died. And I asked them concerning Jerusalem, and they said to me: the survivors that are left, from the captivity in the province, are there in great distress and reproach. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down. The gates are burnt with fire. When I heard these words, I sat down and wept, and mourned day and night, and fasted and prayed. Nehemiah, whose name means the comfort of God, Nehemiah is a picture of the Holy Ghost; and you'll find when you look in the Bible, Father, Son and Holy Ghost all have one mind and one heart. It's a heart of love. It's a heart of compassion for people. God raised us for a purpose. When God designed man, He designed us to represent Him as ambassadors, to be creative, to change the world that we were born into. He raised us up for a purpose and destiny, but when the devil came in, he burnt God's plans. He broke God's plans, he damaged God's plan, and yet we see the heart of God.

Notice what Nehemiah does. He asks them - God is always enquiring. God is always searching, to find where people are at. When God came into the garden of Eden, He said: Adam, where are you? Not that He didn't know where he was; His heart was broken, because the relationship was fractured. He said: Adam - this is a relational question - where are you? How often, or how infrequently, we have people come up and ask you the question: how are you doing, what's happening in your life, with a heart to know you. That's what Nehemiah does. He asks the question: how are the people of God who survived the captivity? What is their condition? What is the city of Jerusalem like? He asked questions to find out the problem - = because you know, the way you want to find out what's going on in people's lives is to ask questions. You'd be amazed, if you have a heart to hear, a heart that loves people and cares about them, and you begin to ask questions, they'll open up how they're really doing. I'm surprised how often people break down and weep, as they begin to talk about the turmoil

they're facing, and the loneliness that it brings.

So few people would come alongside, and find them, and say: how are you doing? How can I help? And that's what Nehemiah does. That's his heart. Notice then he sat down. When Nehemiah sat down - sit down means you're no longer able to stand up. It's a picture of the grief that the Holy Ghost feels. The Bible tells us the Holy Spirit is incredibly sensitive. He feels things deeply and passionately, and so the Bible tells us not to grieve the Holy Spirit. The Bible describes in Ephesians, Chapter 4, it says we grieve Him through bitterness. We grieve Him when there's anger, we grieve Him when there's hatred in our heart. We grieve Him when there's malice, when we harbour resentment, when we harbour things in our heart - we were never designed to operate like that. You can't run your life like that, but when that happens, when there's these things in our heart the Bible says the Holy Spirit is grieved.

And so it says: he sat down. He was grieved, and the Bible says: he wept. He poured out his heart. Nehemiah, the man, felt the anguish of God. He felt the pain of God's heart. The spirit of God came upon him, and he began to feel what God feels about people who are burnt stones, about people who's lives are broken, young men, young women who've been abused, who've come from broken families, whose lives are damaged. This is the heart of God - He weeps. When did you last weep over someone? When did you last experience God putting a compassion in your heart, so when you heard of something, you felt, you just sat down and began to weep for their condition, and pray for them, and begin to fast for the breakthrough? So often it's not like that. We hear of what's happening and we begin to judge, and wall in our heart that person away, but God doesn't do that. Nehemiah didn't do that. He began to weep and weep and weep, day and night, the anguish of God's heart, the compassion of God came on him. He felt God's heart, and all he could do was weep and weep and weep.

If you've ever had that experience you can understand it. I've known times when I felt the spirit of God come on me, and I just wept uncontrollably. It was not about something I had done, or a mistake, or a failure; it was about the condition of people, and how God felt about them. When you walk through the Bible, you find how the heart of God is to restore broken people. The heart of God is filled with compassion. I encourage you to read, and find how many times compassion caused Jesus to do things. You find a number of stories in the Bible - let me just throw a few out. There's a leper came to Jesus in his broken condition, his

damaged condition. He was a burnt stone, burnt by this horrible loathsome disease, and rejected by people. But when he came to Jesus, Jesus was moved with compassion, and reached out and engaged him in his horror, in his sickness, and touched him, then healed him. If we're going to help people, you have to let the compassion of God move you to engage them in their sickness and pain, and not be disgusted and turned off by it.

You know another example is found in Luke 7, where there was a young man, and the young man had died. The mother's grieving, and the mother's a burnt stone. Her husband's gone, her son has gone, her life is gone, she's burnt; and He reached - He was moved with compassion, and brought life into that situation. God wants to move us with compassion, to bring life into people who are in a place of mourning and death. Jesus stopped, went over, and got involved with them. He touched the dead man, He touched that dead man. You don't touch dead things, they're unclean, but Jesus didn't have a care about that. He carried life to change it. God wants you and I to have His heart, to carry His life, and engage people who are broken. Jesus saw the multitudes. He was moved with compassion.

Now I want you to see this. It tells us very clearly in Matthew 9:35-36, the first few verses, that God's response to seeing multitudes of broken stones is to raise up labourers to minister to them. You can't just pray for God to do it all. God has chosen to work through people, and so God is looking for people who will have His compassion. It's not about having a good idea. Good ideas won't get you to last in the call of ministry. Good ideas don't cause you to overcome injustice. Good ideas don't cause you to overcome betrayal, or people who show lack of gratitude, when you've done all you can, and they just walk away. No, you have to have the compassion of God. This is what Nehemiah had; and Jesus, when He saw the multitudes who were desperately in need, this was His strategy: raise up people, make them living stones, and send them out in their positioning, in their rank and their order, to bring healing and wholeness. You're such a stone.

Let me say this: there is no believer in Christ who's not called to restore burnt stones. You which are spiritual, restore a person overtaken. If you call yourself spiritual, call yourself any kind of believer, then the burnt stones are our ministry. People are our ministry, people who've been burnt in the circumstances of life. It says: if you are spiritual, then restore people that have been burnt. It says: true religion is to visit the widows and the orphans in their affliction, to

visit the burnt stones and comfort them. You cannot have a vibrant, vital spirit life and not minister to burnt stones. That's the heart of God is people, ruined cities, burnt stones, devastations of generations. God wants to heal and restore them. The Bible talks about Father; you see the Holy Ghost in the form of Nehemiah. You see Jesus' ministry, and you find the Father in the book where it talks about the prodigal son. The prodigal son begins to return. The Bible says - the Father - what does it say about him? It says: while he was a long way off; in other words, his heart was after the son. Is your heart after people who are lost and broken, back-slidden Christians? Do you care about them, or do you find a reason to find fault and judge them; oh, look what they're doing now. That's a judgement. Well I don't know how they could be doing that, they call themselves Christians - that's a judgement.

How easy it is to judge, but the Bible says: the Father was moved with compassion, a heart of compassion; and it says: he ran to the son, and he hugged him and he wept. God is passionate! Passionless religion is a curse. It's not Biblical. It's not the heart of God. Jesus stood over Jerusalem, that great city in all its fineness and splendour, and He wept. He wailed aloud with grief, with longing and yearning for the city. Conservative, passionless, expressionless religion does not change anything. God wants a fire ignited in our hearts, a fire for the lost, a fire for burnt stones, a fire that's not just come out of human concern and sympathy, a fire that's ignited out of the place of prayer and fasting! In Isaiah 58 it talks about the fasting before the Lord, and the outcome is to become a repairer of the breach, a repairer of broken lives, a restorer of people. There's none of us here not called to be restorers of lives; but if your life is damaged, and you yourself are a broken stone, a burnt stone, and you're in the pile of rubble, and your life is preoccupied just trying to look after yourself - how will you ever rise up, take your position in the work of God, and begin to restore others!

You must make the commitment: I will not stay a burnt stone any longer. I will do whatever it takes to get up out of this situation, be restored, be full of the life of God, full of passion, full of fire! I want the fire of my first love back again! I want to be alive in God again! I want to be serving God passionately! God, come upon me and ignite that fire! See prayer is the place it's ignited, prayer, God wants to restore the burnt stones. You see Nehemiah in Nehemiah 2:17 he says to the people, he says can you see the distress we're in? Can you see the

condition of lives and families? He said let us rise up and build. Let's rise and build. Let's arise on the inside and become builders. God is wanting builders. God is wanting builders.

I want to just share with you just some simple steps to restoration, and then we'll just finish up with a little clip I want to show you. In 2 Kings 6, it shows you five simple steps of restoration. I won't develop them, I'll just throw the seeds out for you, but you find it in 2 Kings, Chapter 6. I love the prophetic stories in the Bible, but every one of them contains insights that are very relevant for us. In 2 Kings 6, it's the story of an axe head being restored, and it says: here the sons of the prophets said to Elisha - Verse 1 - the place where we dwell with you is too small for us. In other words, they're feeling contained. They were feeling limited. They were feeling restricted. We want something big, and he said: can we go to Jordan, let every man take a beam from there. Let's make a place where we may dwell; and he said go. Then one said: come with your servants. He said: I will go; and he went with them. When they came to Jordan they cut down the trees. Notice everyone was a builder of the house, everyone went with an axe, everyone went with a purpose to build. There wasn't one of them who wasn't determined to build.

But one of them, as he was cutting the tree, the iron axe head fell off into the water, and he cried out and said: alas master, it was borrowed! So the man of God said: where did it fall? And he showed him the place, so he cut off a stick, and he threw it in there, and he made the iron float. And he said: therefore pick it up for yourself. He reached in, and he reached out with his hand, and he took it - an amazing thing. You notice now we see the lost axe head, and so there's a need for restoration.

Why is the axe head important? The axe head speaks of a life, flowing in the Holy Ghost. If you've got an axe, and it's got no axe head, you can't cut a thing. A Christian with no power of the Holy Ghost flowing through them doesn't really achieve much at all. That's why Jesus said: wait until you get the Holy Ghost, get the Holy Ghost on you, get filled with the Holy Ghost. You will be an effective witness for Me. So we need the flow of the Holy Ghost; so a wooden stick is a picture of the man. The axe head is a picture of the cutting edge of the Holy Ghost, the anointing of the spirit of God flowing through you, energising your thoughts, giving you creative ideas, causing you to hear the voice of God, causing you to have a heart for people, causing you to reach into lives, and see

the way into them to cut into their hearts, and to penetrate them, and to see them changed.It's the anointing of the Holy Spirit, God gives every believer an axe head. He gives every believer the anointing of the Holy Ghost. It's your responsibility not to lose the flow of God's power and presence. It's your responsibility to keep that axe head sharp. It's your responsibility to learn to listen to the voice of God, hear the voice of God, respond to the voice of God, do the things God's showing you to do, in your work, in your school, in your home, wherever it might be. We're all called to be an axe for Jesus Christ.

In the Book of Jeremiah He describes His church, the whole church as being His mighty battleaxe. In other words, in the hand of God, it cuts down the armies of the enemy; in the hand of God, it subdues demons; in the hand of God it shuts down the gates of hell. That's the church of the living God. You're called to rise up like that! Here this poor fellow started out well, then he lost the axe head. Notice without the axe he can't do the work. Without the flow of the Holy Ghost, you can't do the work of God. You can have a program, you can do some good works, but you won't see the fruit, that only the Holy Ghost can bring. You need the Holy Ghost!Every area of the church needs the Holy Ghost. We need that reviving fire of the Holy Ghost in every part of us! You need the Holy Ghost in your family. We need the HOLY GHOST! We need the power of God! A church with no power cannot be effective. We need God's presence filling our lives, filling and empowering us, so you burn with passion. People will come and see you then. A person without passion has got not much interest for anyone I don't think.

So you notice it was borrowed, so it wasn't something he owned. It was something he was a steward of. You are a steward of your walk with God. You are a steward of your relationship with God. If you have compromised, if you've walked away from God in your heart, if you've let your heart be filled with bitterness and anger, then you've lost your axe head. A heart filled with bitterness and judgement, religiosity, has got no cut, got no fire, got nothing to make a difference. God's calling the church out of that place, wants the axe head back, wants the axe head back on the church. He wants the axe head back in your life. He wants us to rise up, and begin to start to challenge powers of darkness, and enter into the community, and see people set free!

So what happened? Notice the first thing. He said: he cried out; and said: alas master, for it was borrowed. So the first thing you have to do if you are a burnt

stone, if you've lost the fire of God, if you've lost the cutting edge with God, you have to admit there's a problem. The worst thing is to carry on trying to cut trees, and you've got no axe head. But most of the church does that, uses a wooden stick to try and cut down trees, and haven't noticed it's not got an axe head on it. Many churches in New Zealand would not know if the Holy Ghost was there, or not there. It literally would not make a difference, and that means, for the most part, they're using a wooden stick to try and chop down trees. We need the axe head of the Holy Ghost. We need His presence flowing through out life; so if that's not so, we need to admit it. You'd need to admit it. Deception's a powerful thing - we think we're doing better than we are. There's nothing that God can't solve, but you've got to really admit they've got a problem first of all. We can blame others. Blaming others is wonderful, it's a great way - there's a guy Benjamin Franklin said this: He that's good at making excuses, and blaming others, is seldom good at anything else. That's not a bad one is it, aye? He that's good at making excuses, is seldom good at anything else; so I don't want you to be good at making excuses aye. So what is the issue that God's speaking to you about? I want you to admit it: God, I need to deal with this issue. I need to face it right now.

Here's the second thing: he was willing to go back. Notice the question was, where did it fall? Where did you lose it? Where did you get burnt? When did it happen? Where was the place? What happened in your experience, that caused you get burnt? Maybe for some, it's way back when you were a young boy, a young child, and now you've been burnt and burnt and burnt and burnt; and now God's saying: wow, where do I start? Go back to where it first started. Go back, get into right back there, where the thing started. For some it started in your family line, some it started as a young person, some it started last year. Wherever you got burnt go back; where did it fall? So you've got to overcome shame and embarrassment, just go back to where I lost it; got to admit the problem, go back to where it is. Where'd you lose the axe head? How did the problem come? The place where the problem began, is the place you go looking for the solution: the root of unforgiveness, the root of resentment, of disappointment, injustice, anger. That's the place you go back to. Just go back to it, and then you apply the cross.

Notice what he did: he cut down a stick; and the Bible often, when the Bible's using the word stick or tree or anything like that, it's talking about people. People are likened to wood or trees or whatever; but in this case, the stick is the cross of

Calvary, because Jesus died on that tree; and when He died, He died for your failures. He died for your hurts, He died for your offences, He died to deal with stuff. He died to set us free of iniquity, He died to heal the broken hearted. He died to get us set free, so you need to learn how to bring the cross, how to come to Jesus Christ, how to come to the cross where offences were dealt with. The cross is the power of God to salvation, to all who believe! There's no problem you can't get out of, no failure you can't rise up from; not if you bring the cross of Christ, and His blood into it.

Notice what he did, you have to apply the cross. You've got to take those injustices to the cross. God can deal with the bitter waters of your life. God can deal with the blackened part of your life too, make it really quite different. So the next thing is, you need to expect something to happen. If I come to the cross, I need to come expecting God to do something, fully expecting He will change my life. He will resolve this thing. The sin will be forgiven; the hurt will be healed, the injustice will go away, the pain will just vanish. I'll begin to start to walk out of it. I've got to have faith that God can do it. Got to have faith.

Finally you notice here, he said: the axe head floated up to the surface. Now that's a miracle isn't it? That's where the supernatural comes. There's something about when you come to the cross, that the anointing is released. You notice, it floated up to the surface - so this is a supernatural moving of God; and when we come to the cross and deal with our sin, deal with our failures, deal with our injustices, hurt and grief then what happens - there's something about the Holy Ghost, just begins to come again.

Now notice what he had to do. He said: stretch out. You've got to stretch again, and pick it up, and begin to go back to the building. You see one of the hardest things is, its one thing to come to the cross and release forgiveness; it's another thing to stand up and then start to love people. You have to stretch out to do that. You may have an injustice or some kind of offence; it's one thing to bring it and share it with Jesus. It's another thing to stretch out into the Holy Ghost, and begin to express the love of God to that person, to walk past that injustice like it never happened, and to begin to start to flow again. You can't influence people powerfully if there's no flow of the Holy Ghost, so you've got to make a decision that: I'll love, I'll honour where I've been dishonoured. I will love where I've been cursed. I'll bless people, I'll start to speak well - in fact, I will own my own life. I will stretch into God, and stretch out to people, and see God move.

One of the most common things that burns us, is conflicts and things that happen in relationships, and always it's the same thing. If you've lost the flow of God, your cutting edge, you come back to the place you lost it, to the situation you lost it in. You come back to the cross. You come back, and are willing to let it go to the Lord - let it go. It doesn't matter if it never gets solved, doesn't matter if no one ever owns up to anything. What matters is that you let it go at the cross, the greatest injustice of all; and then stretch out to go back into the work God called you to go into. There'd be many perhaps who've got all kinds of issues. You're a burnt stone in the pile, and God wants you to find out: well how did I become a burnt stone? I need to come to the cross and bring the cross into it; and then stretch out, and start flowing with the Holy Spirit again. The Bible says be kind, tender hearted, loving one another. That's when the axe head's on your life, when you're able to do that. Well what about that person? It doesn't matter what they're doing. Will you be an axe head for God?

Summary Notes

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Introduction:
Neh 4:1-2
"Will they revive the stones from the heaps of rubbish – stoned which are burned?"
· Rubbish = 6038 = rubble of destroyed city, burnt stones, discarded and cast aside
· Revive = 2421 = to bring to life, restore strength and vitality
· What is a burnt stone?
· Prophetic picture of people, people who have gone through painful experiences – burnt
· Fire blackened, charred, disfigured, crumbling and out of position for their destiny
· Heart broken by grief, disappointment, offense, injustice and pain
· Stone charred with bitterness, resentment, unforgiveness, judgment, blame
· People who think God could never use them again
· People who since their fire declared Never to Trust, Never to Love, Never to Speak again
· God walks through the rubble of Jerusalem, looking for stones He can restore

The Heart of God for Burnt Stones
Neh 1:1-4
"When I heard their words I sat down and wept and mourned"
a) Nehemiah – Comfort of God, picture of the Holy Spirit, of Jesus the builder of the Church John 14:16
b) "I asked them" – longing to know the condition of God's people, City of God
c) "Sat down" = the Holy Spirit can be grieved, wounded, He is very sensitive
Wept = overcome by the anguish of God for his people
Great sorrow of heart as he felt the heart of God
Grief = sign of the assignment that God is giving you
Crying/caring = evidence of the problem God has called you to solve
d) Restoration is birthed out of feeling the heart of God and being overwhelmed
Jesus was moved with compassion
Mark 1:41 He touched the leper – burnt stone!
Luke 7:14 He raised the young man - burnt stone!
Matthew 9:35-36 He fed the multitudes - burnt stones!
Matthew 10:1 He raised and sent builders - burnt stones!
Father God is involved with compassion
Luke 15:20 - He ran and embraced and wept over and restored prodigal son – burnt stone!
Luke 19:41 Jesus wept over Jerusalem - Burnt stone!
e) The heart of God is passionate about the burnt stones and broken cities
Jer 8:21
"For the heart of my people I am hurt, I am black"
Moves of God are birthed out of passion, feeling heart of God not by good ideas
Where is the passion? Where is the weeping? Where is the fasting and prayer?
Is 42:22
God wants to restore burnt stones
Neh 2:17 "You see the distress we are in, let us arise and build!"
God loves you and wants to restore you, fill your heart with passion, restore 1st Love

Burnt Stones (3 of 4)

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When Nehemiah looked around and saw the broken lives, it was in his heart not to judge or condemn, but to be part of the answer.

Every believer is called to be a builder, because a true Son is a "builder of the household name". When you catch the heart of the Holy Ghost, something in you will resonate, will feel concern, will rise up on the inside. I want to be a builder for God! I want my life to count for something! Every believer is given spiritual gifts (1 Cor 14:12), but let it be to build up the church - desire to excel in building up people.

Isaiah 61 - "the spirit of the Lord is upon me" - it's all to do something. It's to open blind eyes. It's to heal broken hearts. It's to restore the desolation of previous generations. He wants people who are broken, disconnected and cut down to be restored and lifted up, doing something useful.



Nehemiah, Chapter 2. I want to just pick up about pushing through the difficulties; Nehemiah 2:17-18. Nehemiah came and he said: you look at the distress that we're in, how Jerusalem is waste, the gates are burnt with fire, gates are burnt down. Come, let us build the wall of Jerusalem, so we're no longer a reproach. And I told them of the hand of God, which is good upon me, and the king's words that he had spoken to me. So they said - this is what the people said. This is what happened inside people, when the Holy Ghost begins to move upon them; and Nehemiah, whose name means the comfort of God, and he came and he looked at the city which was in ruins. He saw burnt stones, broken stones, he saw rubble everywhere.

But you know he saw something beyond that. He saw, through the eyes of faith, what a group of people can do - to change a city, to change lives that are broken down; and when Nehemiah looked around and saw the broken lives, it was in his heart not to condemn. It's in his heart not to judge. It was in his heart to be part of the answer. God calls you and me to be part of the answer to our city, part of

the answer to the younger generation, part of the answer to the broken lives; not to just fall off and sit in a retirement home, and do nothing for the rest of our lives! My goodness! What a waste of our life.

We're called to be BUSY in the king's business, busy in advancing the kingdom of God. There's no exceptions, not one. All are called to arise and build. You know when you catch the heart of the Holy Ghost this is what you'll catch inside: something in you will resonate, something in you will feel concern, something in you will say I want to rise up on the inside. I don't want to live in the dust of defeat! I don't want to live in the rubble of my past life. I want to be a builder for God! I want my life to count for something! A lot of people they think the anointing is just to feel good and shake and fall over and see visions; but you read Isaiah 61, "the spirit of the Lord is upon me" - it's all to DO something. It's to open blind eyes. It's to heal broken hearts. It's to restore the desolation of previous generations. Read it for yourself.

The anointing of the Holy Ghost, that same Holy Ghost that God gave you, is for you to DO something! It's to influence lives! It's to see people saved! It's to see them get filled with the Holy Ghost, and begin to get vision and purpose and destiny - and this is what Nehemiah had in mind: restoring burnt stones, once living beautiful stones, burnt by warfare - now restore them, and reposition them in the wall of destiny. That's what God has for people, He wants people who are broken, disconnected and cut down to be restored and lifted up doing something useful.

You know the Bible tells us very clearly: every believer is called to be a builder. I don't see anywhere in the Bible where it says a Christian is called to be a sitter, not at all; sit at the feet of Jesus, but then get up and do something. The word Son in the Bible, the Old Testament, is the word Ben, meaning: a builder of the household name. So when you come to Jesus Christ, you're not an add-on, and you're not a servant; you were born into His family, His spirit comes in you and changes you; and then you're called to be a builder, because a true Son is a builder of the household name. A true Son is a builder of the family, and so the Sons of God, those who are lead by the spirit of God, become builders of lives.

It doesn't take any faith to criticise, it doesn't take any faith to tear anyone down; it takes faith to see a burnt stone, a broken life, a drug addict, an alcoholic, someone whose marriage is in tatters - it takes faith to see in that burnt stone, a

restored stone, back in the wall of destiny. You and I are called to be those kinds of people, to do that kind of thing. So the Bible tells us we're to build. We're to build lots of things - but you're to build your personal life, and 1 Corinthians 3:9 it says: you are God's building; so the first part of the building is yourself. You are responsible for your personal growth, not someone else. I can't make you grow. You have to choose whether you'll grow. You'll choose whether you're going to build your life or not. You'll choose whether you waste the opportunities or use them; but all building requires a commitment and we're called to build. Jude 20: building yourselves up in your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, so you can build your spirit. I can't do that for you!

You can build your character - I can't do that for you either. You can build your capacity - I'm sorry, I can't do that for you either. You can build and develop your skills, so you have more to contribute to the work of God - we can help you with a bit of that. We can help you with all of those things to some extent, but actually you have to make a decision: I don't want to be a weak Christian, who's ineffective for God. I want my life to count. I want to be a builder. You have to make that decision every day when you get up: I'll build my life. I'll build an altar to God, and place a prayer - time in the word of God; time beginning to lay before God my day, and starting to think: how will I walk with God today? You're called to build your life, because everything takes effort to build. It takes commitment, it takes perseverance, and there are obstacles, there are enemies, and we're called to build the house of God of course, called to build. 1 Corinthians 14:12 it says: if you're zealous for spiritual gifts, and love the power of the Holy Ghost, wonderful - but let it be to build up the church, desire to excel in building up people. Isn't that amazing aye?

1 Corinthians 14:12, so every believer is given spiritual gifts. Some don't even realise that, and some don't operate in them. However God gives every believer spiritual giftings - and there's only one reason for them: they're for building up people. Get words of knowledge, prophesy for people - it's all for building people up and encouraging people. Pray for the sick and get them healed - it's all to encourage people and build them up. Get them delivered is to build them up! Don't focus on the devils, we focus on building a house for God. See, don't focus on a haunted house, focus on the temple, what the temple could look like filled with the presence of God. So we're all called to be builders. You're called to be a builder, you are a builder, it's just a matter of whether you're busy in what you're

building - or whether you're smoking on the job. Having lunch, long lunch. A lot of Christians are having a long lunch - just out to lunch some; but you know we're not like that. We're here to work on the house of God and to build people, encourage people.

Everyone's called to be an encourager, to be a builder of people. You can do that and it works through relationships. In Ephesians 4:15-16 it tells us that what we have to contribute, flows through from one member of the body to the other, through joints - so you have to build relationships. You may have some great call on your life, but if you don't develop that and build relationships, it can't come about. We have to build relationships. It's through relationships that the gifts in life of God flows, and relationships are challenging to build. There's often difficulties in building relationships; but on the other hand, it's through relationships that you have a chance to minister to people. If you want to see people saved, you've got to build a friendship with them, build a connection with them. Don't start talking to them about Jesus, take an interest in them, and begin to find out where they are, and what's going on in their life. Think that's a burnt stone there. They don't know it, but I know it, and in a short time after I've asked a few questions, and listened, I'll begin to find out just the extent to which that life is damaged. I'll be able to offer help and support, or maybe just practical kindness. Most people, its just kindness will open their heart, for you to connect into them, so then you can be a builder of their life.

So one of the dilemmas of course, is we get too busy to build relationships; but we have to build connections with people, through which we can bring the life and the gospel of Jesus Christ. Every believer's called to do that. Don't say you're too busy, that is the job. It is the job. Building relationships, bringing the life we have to someone else; and in those relationships, also receiving from others in the body. None of us can do without the others. I need what you have, and you need what I have - we need one another; and so relationships in the body, we're not meant to be just independent of each other, and self-sufficient, and I've got all the anointing I need and I don't need you. That's nonsense, spiritual pride. The Bible says: we can't say we don't need one another - we do. We need one another; and so through relationships, the life flows.

But this is the thing about building. In case you didn't realise it, the devil gets hostile when you try to build something for God. Look at this in Nehemiah, Chapter 4: so it happened when Sanballat - he's the enemy - he heard that we

were rebuilding the wall. He was furious! Very angry, and so he had a number of ways he tried to stop the Jews. First he began to mock them and belittle them, and so he said: oh, these feeble Jews, what are they going to do? Going to fortify themselves? They going to offer sacrifices? What do they think, God's going to help with something? Will they complete it in a day? Will they revive the stones out of the heaps of rubbish, the stones which are burnt?

And Tobiah, who was beside him said: Ha! Ha! These feeble Jews, what are they doing? It's so pathetic what they're doing. If even a little fox jumped on it, the wall would fall down. Your life is so pathetic - a little problem comes along, you'll fall over. Can you understand, one of the key strategies of the enemy is to belittle us, to mock and laugh at us, to point out how weak we are, to point out in our life where we lack. Why? He wants you just to be discouraged, so you won't build - and its here in the Bible. You want to see how Nehemiah dealt with it, and you'll see how to deal with these issues. There will always mockers and despisers, and scorners and laughers. If you're going to do anything - and I mean anything substantial or different - there will be mockers and scorners and laughers. If you want to build something for God, there'll be mockers and scorners and laughers. If they don't do it to you directly, you'll find demonic spirits will do it - they'll laugh at you, belittle you, and laugh at what you're doing.

In your dark moments, when you're wondering how to go forward, then they push in hard, to make you feel like you have nothing, and you're going nowhere. You have to fight them off, and so this story is about these kinds of weapons, what happened - and so he just got to prayer. Verse 6; we built the wall, and the wall was half way up, and of course when everything's half way through the job, that's when it gets a little difficult doesn't it, you know? We all start well, but we don't always finish well, and so half way through there were some problems; and Sanballat, Verse 7, got very angry. Verse 8, they came and they conspired to come and attack Jerusalem and create confusion. Nevertheless we made our prayer to God. Notice prayer keeps coming through - and so we set a watch against them day and night. And Judah said: the strength of the labourers is failing, there's so much rubbish, we're not able to build; and our adversaries said: ha, they won't know or see anything until we come in the midst and kill them, and cause the work to cease. So it was, the Jews who dwelt near the enemies, they told us 10 times: whatever place you turn, they'll be on you mate. Look out!

What negative, pathetic people they are, aren't they?

Now you notice what happens here, is once God's people decide they're going to move forward and build; once you decide you're going to build your life with God; once you decide you're going to build your marriage in a Godly way; you're going to build your family in a Godly way; going to build your finances; you're going to build your business; whatever area you are going to purpose in your heart to build - you have to understand there will be resistance. It will come in a number of ways, and it came in a number of ways here. Every lot of building that we do for God has some opposition. So first they want to create confusion, so initially the opposition was external. There were people outside just trying to confuse them, fill them with fear; but there's a number of weapons that we used against them. The first thing that happened you notice, there were external enemies pushing against them; but then they had enemies in their own heart. The devil's really easy to handle; it's what's in your own heart's a little harder, because you've got to dig in and let God deal with it. I've found it quite painful sometimes.

Notice what they're saying. Judah said: the strength of the labourers is failing, there's so much rubbish we can't build the wall. So often when we're trying to do something great for God, fatigue sets in. You start off well, but you get tired on the way. You have unexplained setbacks. You have disappointments, you have difficulties. You become fatigued. You have spiritual conflict that leaves you tired. When I get involved in doing a lot of deliverance, I get very, very tired - got to really watch my energy levels, because after you're tired, that's when you get disheartened and discouraged, and all kinds of other problems can come. So when we set out to do something, fatigue is always a problem, because it can lead to discouragement; and it can come because you've had setbacks and difficulties. It can lead to some kind of discouragement. The second thing that happens is frustration. Notice what they said: there's so much rubbish. They looked around, all they could see was all the rubbish that was around.

Now we can deal with fatigue. There's a place called the Rest of God. We need to learn how to come in, and rest in God and prayer. It's not hard, you've just got to slow down, and just take time from the busyness to just worship the Lord, and allow His spirit to refresh you quietly - not a lot of noise, you know, in quietness and confidence you rest - that's where you begin to discover your strength again. Sometimes we're too noisy, and we don't have time, or don't slow down to hear

God, and let Him speak in, and put strength back in, and put the energy back in. The other thing is where we get overwhelmed with frustrations. Notice what they said: there's so much rubbish. They began to look around and man, the problems, the rubbish, the debris and the mess, it looked impossible to do it. Perhaps your business looks impossible to break through. Perhaps what you're doing looks impossible to get where you're trying to get. It just looks like there's so many problems. Sometimes families look that way. You'll have this vision of raising great kids, and then on the way there's all these difficulties. You just wake up and there it is; the house that was tidy last night, there's debris everywhere. Where did it come from? Who knows? Just open the door of the car, and you can feed someone for a week out of what you find on the floor there, you know. It's quite bad sometimes.

So it's very easy to get disheartened and discouraged. We have to continue to keep our vision. Notice they've got their eyes on the rubbish, rather than on the vision. They've got their eyes on the problems, rather than seeing what God was wanting to build. You've got to keep your eye on the vision. I'll show you what Nehemiah did to fix it in just a moment; and then the final thing you see there is fear - so fatigue and frustration and fear - key things that stop us working and building. Now there's always someone tries to oppose the work of God, but the first thing is, demons will oppose the work of God. You'll always have pressure on your mind and heart, but the worst kind of discouragement is the discouragement that comes - notice the Christians, the Jews who live near the enemy. Believers, who live compromised, usually are cynical, critical, negative, about the work of God. I'd hope you wouldn't be one of them. Notice what it says, the Jews who lived near the enemy - believers whose lives are so compromised, and so far from God, that all they can report is negativity.

Notice 10 times they said: oh, oh, like the Scotsman in Dad's Army, ooh, oh, you know - just always doom and gloom! We're doomed! That's the kind of message they come up. For some people, that's all they come up with; and you notice the way it's put: they. I don't know who 'they' are, but 'they' are saying: it can't be done. They, all of them are saying that. Lots of people are saying this. That's the way it goes. You just ask the question, well who? Goes very quiet. Goes very quiet. We don't need negativity. Negative people are already defeated. They're the Jews next to the enemy. I don't want to be the Jews next to the enemy; I want to be building the house of God. I don't want to be living in that kind of stuff. We

need to have our life so we're free from that kind of stuff, and we're living in faith. I want you to see what Nehemiah did, because he did a very, very simple thing. I'll just finish with just simply what he did. He's very, very good.

Nehemiah looked at the scene. He realised: man, I've got to do something! I love the way he doesn't react, he just looks at the deal, and then he makes a decision: I'm going to solve the problems. God wants you to be a problem-solver, not a problem-pointer-outer! A lot of people are problem-pointer-outers. We should go for a walk through the city, and point out the problems - but actually we're not called to do that. We're called to provide solutions! The Holy Ghost is a source of solutions!

So he did three simple things: number one, he got them reconnected. He positioned the men, so notice what he did: positioned the men behind the lower parts of the wall, set the men according to their families. He got everyone reconnected, just got people connected. One of the things when you're discouraged and down - just get connected to other believers who are positive. Get connected to people who love you. Notice, he put them in family groups - where there's love, and there's care, and there's nurture? We need to be connected to people who care about you; but you know something? It doesn't happen unless you follow the Holy Ghosts direction - and get connected. You've got to make the connections. Get on the phone. Get into a small group. Go somewhere where you've got people who know you, love you, and if you're down they can say: what's going on? Can we lift you up? Can we encourage you?

The second thing he did was - restore their focus. He said to them: remember the Lord. Don't be afraid of the enemy (verse 14) remember the Lord, great and awesome - and fight. Get some fight in you. Don't lie down, be a beaten up Christian because, you've got some troubles. Get insight, get back, and get remembering God. One of the greatest things you can do is begin to remember the past victories of the Lord, remember how God has touched the lives of other people, remember the stories in the Bible, remember! Get back into your mind how great God is! Then the rubble starts to get smaller, and smaller, as we get a bigger God in our mind. You get focus back on the Lord.

When David faced his defeat - he remembered the Lord. Psalm 77, David's in defeat there - he remembered the Lord. All through the Bible, they just got focus back on God, and God lifted their faith, lifted their spirit, and they carried on in

the job. Isn't that fantastic? They carried on in the job! They returned to the work. Listen, every opposition of the enemy is to stop you working to do the work of God. The enemy will do anything he can, to get you just to pull out of being involved in building the people of God, and the house of God. If he's got you to pull back, you're basically a stone who's burnt, and who's out of the wall and neutralised. And God's desire is to get you back up again, get you back in, get you into place. God's got a great way of doing that; He connects us in families, connects us together in small groups, puts us together, gets us refocused back on the Lord again, and then encourages us to make a stand, begin to rebuild again.

I want to show you just a simple little clip, we'll just finish with this, really quite inspiring actually and it's about Nehemiah.

Summary Notes

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Introduction:
Neh 2:17-18
“Let us arise and build”
· Nehemiah = “Comfort of God” = Holy Spirit
· The Holy Spirit stirs the people of God with vision of a city rebuilt
· The Holy Spirit calls them to arise and build – become the answer to the problem
· Holy Spirit issues the same challenge to the church in every generation
· “Arise and Build!” Restore the beautiful stones; position and build them into the wall of destiny

Every Believer is A Builder
‘Son’ = OT1121 = ‘Ben’ = to build, rebuild, establish, build the family name
Every believer is born into the family of God and called to build the house Is 6:4 Purpose of Anointing
a) Build your Personal Life:
· 1 Cor 3:9 “You are God’s building (architecture)”
· Jude 20 “Building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying”
· You are responsible to build, establish your life in God
· Build your faith, your character, your capacity, your skill level
· This takes commitment, perseverance, courage, a plan

b) Build the House of God:
· 1 Cor 14:12 “…you are zealous for spiritual gifts, let it be for the edification of the church that you seek to excel”
· Every believer is given spiritual gifts to build the people of God
· Eph 4:15-16 “ Relationships are the channel for gifts to flow and build”
· Neh 4:6 “So we built the wall for the people had a mind to work”

3. All Spiritual Building faces opposition, Problems – Expect it!:
· Neh 4:1 “When Sanballot heard we are rebuilding the wall he was furious”
· Neh 4:8 “All of them conspired to come and attack Jerusalem and create confusion”
· Spiritual powers seek to attack and create confusion and discouragement
· Opposition was external (enemies) and internal (within and among themselves)

a) Fatigue
· Verse 10 The strength of the laborers is failing, (stumble, totter, be feeble or weakening)
· It is very easy to start a project – hard to finish
· They were half way through the project
· The personal cost was higher than expected and every one was fatigued
· Fatigue and loss of strength can lead to discouragement
· Conflict, setbacks, difficulties, spiritual pressure, long hours without adequate rest can lead to discouragement

b) Frustration

· Verse 10 “There is so much rubbish”
· There was so much garbage, broken rocks, debris that they felt overwhelmed
· They lost focus – lost sight of what they were building, the big picture
· Easy to become discouraged and lose focus as you see so much rubbish
· Must continually look ahead – in marriage, family, finances or it can be overwhelmed by the negatives, destruction of the past
· Ezra 4:4-5 They had councilors against them to frustrate their purpose
· Frustration: Leads to resentment, anger, stress, anxiety, discouragement
· The pressure of the needs can bring immense frustration – reaction
· This eroded their confidence “We are not able” Num 13:30-31

c) Fear
· Verse 11 ‘Our adversaries said”
· Here is always someone opposed to what God wants to do
· What voices are you listening to? Impact, atmosphere, fear or faith
· Evil spirits will oppose – despise, belittle and attack
· Verse 12 “The Jews who dwelt near them told us 10 times”
· There are Christians living under demonic influence, unresolved issues
· People constantly spoke negatively, critically, cynically
· “They”; “Lots of people say” – gossip fear
· Who is influencing your life? Encouraging or faultfinding?
· These were attempts to fill with fear and intimidate those working

4. Overcoming Discouragement:
i) Don’t react ii) Think solutions iii) Ask questions iv) Take responsibility, initiative
· Nehemiah was proactive in restoring courage and faith and hope
· Rom 15:13 “Now, the God of all hope fill you with joy, peace and believing …”

i. Recognize and Reconnect
· Verse 13 “Therefore I position men … I settle people …”
· He changed his approach to meet the challenge and did not quit and run
· He connected people in family groups with people who love and care
· We need to be connected to people who care for us and stand with us = comfort and encourage

ii. Restore Focus
· Verse 14 “Remember the Lord’
· Where you focus affects your confidence and courage. Focus on the Source
· He focused on the Source of their assignment – returned focus on the Lord
· Joshua, David, Psalm 77 ; Is 40:29
· Jesus declared – “I will build my church and the gates of hell shall nor prevail”
· Heb 12:2-3 “Looking to Jesus, hope set before him, endured…”

iii. Return to the Work
· Verse 15 All of us returned to the wall. Verse 18 “Everyone of the builders had a sword girded at his side as he built”

Burnt Stones (4 of 4)

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Summary Notes

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Introduction:
Neh 4:14
"Do not be afraid! Remember the Lord, great and awesome and fight …"
· Nehemiah = "Comfort of God" = Picture of the Holy Spirit at work
· The Holy Spirit is constantly at work in the earth

God Speaks to Every Generation:
2 Chron 16:9
"For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is perfect toward Him"
The Holy Spirit searches the whole earth
a) He seeks men and women who will hear His voice:
· …who have a heart after God
· …who cannot be satisfied with the status quo
· …who look for an eternal purpose – a cause to live for
· …who look for something worthwhile to spend life on

b) The Holy Spirit wants to Show Himself Strong – working through yielded lives:
· Deliverance
· Healing
· Breakthroughs
· Influence

3. "Do Not be Afraid!"
a) Fear is a Spirit - 2 Tim 1:6
· Fear is an evil spirit, a destroying demon
· Fear stirs the emotions
· Fear paralyses the will
· Fear shuts down your giftings

b) Fear is a Giant – 1 Sam 16:10,11,17
· Fear rises up like a giant
· Fear mocks and defies us
· Fear intimidates and belittles

What do you do!
· Fear of failure?
· Fear of what people say?
· Fear of circumstances?
· Fear of being different?
· Fear of being rejected?

c) Fear is a Thief – Matt 25:25
· Fear comes in to steal

· Steal: your Dreams, your Hopes, your Future

"Do not be Afraid!"
· Jesus constantly spoke – "Do not Fear"
'I am with you always' – Matt 28:20
Men, setbacks, obstacles, pursuing dreams

4. "Remember the Lord":
a) Remember the Lord Great and Awesome!
· Broke the power of Egypt
· Parted the Red Sea
· Appeared in the Fire on the Mount
· Broke down the walls of Jericho
· Threw stones from heaven
· Destroyed armies
· Born into this world
· Challenged the religious and political system
· Healed the lepers
· Opened the eyes of the blind
· Raised the dead to life
· Delivered men from demons
· Forgave His betrayers
· Gave His life for us
· Arose Mightily from the Dead

b) Remember the Lord Great and Awesome!
· Who will one day come again
· Will come with armies of heaven
· Will come in power and majesty
· Will subdue the devil
· Will call men to accountability
· Will reward those who knew and serve Him

c) Remember the Lord Great and Awesome!
· Call men and women to follow Him
· Calls us to a cause - of Christ
· Calls us to make a stand
· To live a godly life
· To advance the Kingdom of God
· To challenge the gates of hell
· To set captives free
· To win men and women to Christ
· To change a city one person at a time

Remember the Lord – Great and Awesome! Fight!

5. Fight!
a) Not called to a life of ease
· Not called to live like others

· Not called to a life of comfort
· You are called to a cause – a fight

b) Called to Fight a Spiritual Battle, to fight for Him
· Not against people
· Against wicked spirits
· Against temptation
· Against lukewarmness/apathy
· Against offenses
· Against distractions and discouragement

c) Called to Fight Daily
· To take up the Sword of the Spirit
· To put on the Armor of God
· To engage in war – in battle
· Battle with eternal consequences
· Battle for the souls of men
· Battle for destinies of men
· To engage in war against darkness
· To be valiant, courageous and strong

d) Called to the Fight of Faith
· Believe God is Good
· Believe God can be trusted
· Believe Gods Word is true
· Believe Gods Word has Power
· Believe all things are possible
· Believe that the Weapons of Warfare are Mighty

6. What will you do!
· Will you be a spectator?
· Will you watch and comment how the battle goes?
· Will you be strong, strong in the Lord, strong in His Word
· Will you arise and build? Arise and fight?
· Will you engage in the work?

Neh 4:15-17
· All of us returned to the wall – everyone to his work
· Everyone of the builders had his sword girded at his side as he built

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