

Rebuild Don't Relax, Part 8

Jimmy Harris March 12, 2017

Continuing our story of *Rebuild Don't Relax*

- King Cyrus had given the Israelites in exile permission to return and rebuild, along with the financing to repair the temple
- 50,000 went, 100,000 stayed behind
- they built the foundation of the temple
- three generations go by
- the enemies of Jerusalem circle and threaten — so they take up arms and get to work
- now the walls are almost done — a famine has spread across the land

What does it mean to “walk in the fear of the LORD?”

REVIEW: *Nehemiah 5:1-6* — *Famine, selling their land to the nobles for food, charging interest, selling their children as slaves....*

• **Nehemiah 5:7-16**

⁷ **After serious thought**, I rebuked the nobles and rulers, and said to them, “Each of you is exacting usury from his brother.” So I called a great assembly against them. And I said to them, “According to our ability we have redeemed our Jewish brethren who were sold to the nations. Now indeed, will you even sell your brethren? Or should they be sold to us?” **Then they were silenced and found nothing to say.** Then I said, “What you are doing is not good. **Should you not walk in the fear of our God because of the reproach of the nations, our enemies?** I also, *with* my brethren and my servants, am lending them money and grain. Please, let us stop this usury! ¹¹ Restore now to them, even this day, their lands, their vineyards, their olive groves, and their houses, also a hundredth of the money and the grain, the new wine and the oil, that you have charged them.” So they said, “We will restore *it*, and will require nothing from them; we will do as you say.” Then I called the priests, and required an oath from them that they would do according to this promise. ¹³ Then I shook out the fold of my garment and said, “So may God shake out each man from his house, and from his property, who does not perform this promise. Even thus may he be shaken out and emptied.” And all the assembly said, “Amen!” and praised the Lord. Then the people did according to this promise. ¹⁴ Moreover, from the time that I was appointed to be their governor in the land of Judah, from the twentieth year until the thirty-second year of King Artaxerxes, twelve years, neither I nor my brothers ate the governor’s provisions. ¹⁵ But the former governors who *were* before me laid burdens on the people, and took from them bread and wine, besides forty shekels of silver. Yes, even their servants bore rule over the people, but I did not do so, **because of the fear of God.** ¹⁶ Indeed, I also continued the work on this wall, and we did not buy any land. All my servants *were* gathered there for the work.

Twice — Nehemiah uses the language “fear of the Lord”

- He told the nobles to walk in *the fear of the Lord*
- He didn’t take money because of *the fear of the Lord*

What does it mean to “walk in the fear of the LORD?”

- The main Hebrew and Greek words translated "fear" in the Bible can have several shades of meaning, but in the context of *the fear of the Lord*, they convey a *positive* reverence.

“The Hebrew verb *yare* can mean “to fear, to respect, to reverence” and the Hebrew noun *yirah* “usually refers to the fear of God and is viewed as a positive quality. This fear acknowledges God’s good intentions (Ex. 20:20). ... This fear is produced by God’s Word (Ps. 119:38; Prov. 2:5) and makes a person receptive to wisdom and knowledge (Prov. 1:7; 9:10)”

- The fear of God is an attitude of respect, a response of reverence and wonder. It is the only appropriate response to our Creator and Redeemer

In scripture there are three typical responses to encountering God

- **Terror:** Trapped, horror, as with a torturer, usually associated with judgment
- **Reverence:** Honor, awe, wonder, associated with respect, as if to a Father
- **Lack of fear:** Mocking, calloused, blind, associated with being a fool, or God’s enemies

To fear the Lord is to know God, and to know God is to fear the Lord.

Fear of the Lord comes from a correct knowledge of the character of God

We have to LEARN how to “walk in the FEAR of the LORD.”

Who is the God that Nehemiah knew?

Nehemiah knew God, so he walked in constant AWARENESS of the AWESOME God above, which made everything down here feel relatively small by comparison.

- **CREATOR:** He is the God who created the universe and set each star in its place
- **NOAH:** He is the same God who was grieved that the people in His world had become evil in everything they did. So he sent a terrible flood that killed everyone except Noah and his family
- **ABRAHAM:** He is the God who promised Abraham a son, and then asked him to sacrifice him on the mountain.
- **MOSES:** burning bush — called his name — take off your shoes — holy ground — Moses was terrified and covered his face because he was afraid to look upon him
- **DAVID:** This is the God who made a King out of a Shepherd

Our God is a consuming fire, He is the Lion and the Lamb, He is the Alpha and the Omega, He is the Prince of Peace, the Lord of Lords, the great I AM! We need to learn how to walk in reverence, and awe in His presence.

¹ Warren Baker and Eugene Carpenter, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament*, (AMG Publishers, 2003), 470-471

**If you want to REBUILD your LIFE,
you need to learn to walk in the fear of the Lord.**

Everything is distorted when you don't walk in the fear of the Lord

It's like the whole world is one of those carnival houses with strange mirrors.

- Small things feel HUGE
- Big things feel SMALL
- Everything is distorted when you don't walk in the fear of the Lord

**When God is big, everything down here stops being distorted —
he breaks all the mirrors so we can see what is really going on.**

• **Nehemiah 6:1-4**

Now it happened when Sanballat, Tobiah, Geshem the Arab, and the rest of our enemies heard that I had rebuilt the wall, and *that* there were no breaks left in it (though at that time I had not hung the doors in the gates), ² that Sanballat and Geshem sent to me, saying, "Come, let us meet together among the villages in the plain of Ono." But they thought to do me harm. ³ So I sent messengers to them, saying, "I *am* doing a great work, so that I cannot come down. Why should the work cease while I leave it and go down to you?" ⁴ But they sent me this message four times, and I answered them in the same manner.

- Nehemiah didn't have time to be bothered
- God and I are building a wall
- When you and God are working on something together — something bigger than you could ever do on your own — the threats will become small — He treats these dangerous men like telemarketers!

• **Nehemiah 6:5-9**

⁵ Then Sanballat sent his servant to me as before, the fifth time, with an open letter in his hand. ⁶ In it *was* written: It is reported among the nations, and Geshem says, *that* you and the Jews plan to rebel; therefore, according to these rumors, you are rebuilding the wall, that you may be their king. ⁷ And you have also appointed prophets to proclaim concerning you at Jerusalem, saying, "*There is a king in Judah!*" Now these matters will be reported to the king. So come, therefore, and let us consult together. ⁸ Then I sent to him, saying, "No such things as you say are being done, but you invent them in your own heart." ⁹ For they all *were trying to* make us afraid, saying, "Their hands will be weakened in the work, and it will not be done." **Now therefore, O God, strengthen my hands.**

- This is a man who knows God, knows where his strength comes from
- Maybe the enemy of your soul has been trying to trap you, to put fear into you, to stop you from moving forward in your REBUILDING
- Have you ever been discouraged, fearful, undermined in your efforts to REBUILD your life?

- **Pray this simple short prayer! *Now therefore, O God, strengthen my hands!***

- **Nehemiah 6:10-13**

¹⁰ Afterward I came to the house of Shemaiah the son of Delaiah, the son of Mehetabel, who *was* a secret informer; and he said, “Let us meet together in the house of God, within the temple, and let us close the doors of the temple, for they are coming to kill you; indeed, at night they will come to kill you.” ¹¹ And I said, “**Should such a man as I flee? And who *is there* such as I who would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in!**” ¹² Then I perceived that God had not sent him at all, but that he pronounced *this* prophecy against me because Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him. ¹³ For this reason he *was* hired, that I should be afraid and act that way and sin, so *that* they might have *cause* for an evil report, that they might reproach me.

“Should such a man as I flee?”!

Do you ever get a “check” in your Spirit?

*You can trust God with **REBUILDING** your life.*

Nehemiah was guided by appropriate fear, but it did not control him. He feared the Lord, and knew God personally — so he could TRUST him with his life!

- **Nehemiah knew God and he trusted Him**

- Nobles
- Governors pension
- False invitations
- False prophet

Grace and Fear?

Last week I said that we can **come before the throne of grace with confidence!**
Now I am saying we **need to walk in the fear of God.**

YES! I am saying both things! Nehemiah teaches us both things!

The New Testament also teaches us about the Fear of the Lord

- **2 Corinthians 7:1**

Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God

- **Acts 9:31**

Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the **fear of the Lord** and **in the comfort of the Holy Spirit**, they were multiplied.

- **Philippians 2:12-14**

Continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose. Do everything without grumbling or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, “children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation.” Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky as you hold firmly to the word of life.

When we walk in the fear of the LORD – we shine!

Don't separate the LOVE of God from the Fear of God

Christians used to be known as “**God-fearing people**” and it was a badge of honor. What happened? Why don't you hear that anymore?

- Fearing God became associated with a checklist of outward behaviors
- Many Christians have associated fearing God with an external form of legalism and threw out the baby with the bathwater
- **Don't separate the LOVE of God from the Fear of God!** God's love is DANGEROUS kind of love!!! It is wild and should frighten you!! He is a Jealous God! A Holy God, a God who is to be feared!

Three ways to respond to an AWESOME God

Parable Jesus told in Luke 15 about the father who had two sons... when the Prodigal Son came to his senses and returned to his father, he had three choices as how to respond:

- **SLAVE** — A place of TERROR. Trapped between an angry father, and a train-wrecked life. Too afraid, too ashamed, too foolish to come home. A slave forever to sin and shame. Afraid to come home?
- **SERVANT** — A place of comfort — where you want to come back to God, but you remain a servant forever. Afraid to come in?
- **SON** — Walking in reverence, amazed by the Father's lavish love, and completely restored as a full heir, a child of God!

Are you a SLAVE, a SERVANT, or a SON?

Closing prayer

Father, we want to know you more.
We want to learn what it is to walk in the fear of the LORD.
Not a slave's fear of condemnation, not a servant's fear trying to earn our way
to your grace, but the reverent holy fear of a son.

Father, we want to trust you with our lives. Whatever stands before us right now we
bring before you, and we ask you to make your ways known to us.
Lead us. Spirit of God, teach us how to walk in the fear of the Lord.
Not as servants, not as slaves, but as your children.

Discussion Questions

1. Today, how do you walk “in the fear of the Lord?”
2. What is the danger in having a “lack of fear” of God?
3. How does life get “distorted” when you do not walk in fear of the Lord?

4. What does getting a Holy Spirit “check in your spirit” mean?
5. Is it possible to walk in the “grace of the Lord” and the “fear of God” at the same time?

Additional scriptures on the fear of the LORD

Psalm 33:18 Behold; the eye of the LORD is on those who fear Him, On those who hope in His mercy,

Psalm 34:7 The angel of the LORD encamps all around those who fear Him, And delivers them.

Psalm 34:9 Oh; fear the LORD, you His saints! *There is no want to those* who fear Him.

Psalm 145:19 He will fulfill the desire of those who fear Him; He also will hear their cry and save them.

Proverbs 10:27 The fear of the LORD prolongs days, But the years of the wicked will be shortened.

Proverbs 14:26 In the fear of the LORD *there is strong confidence*, And His children will have a place of refuge.

Proverbs 14:27 The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, To turn *one* away from the snares of death.

Proverbs 16:6 In mercy and truth Atonement is provided for iniquity; And by the fear of the LORD one departs from evil.

Proverbs 19:23 The fear of the LORD leads to life, *And he who has it will abide in satisfaction*; He will not be visited with evil.