

Rise and Build Part 2

Appropriately we are talking about building as we move into this new year. Our facility is under construction and changes are coming. Hopefully as we shared last week, we are under construction and changes are coming to us in a spiritual sense as well. It's time for us to rise and build!

We shared last week the story of Nehemiah as he rallied the people of Jerusalem to rebuild the walls and gates of the city. As you recall, Jerusalem had been destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 B.C. About fifty years later the Babylonians were conquered by the Persians and the new Persian King Cyrus allowed a group of Jewish exiles to return to Israel. That group worked on rebuilding the temple and other groups returned over time but eventually almost 140-150 years had passed and the walls and gates of Jerusalem had never been rebuilt. Nehemiah hears about this and comes to Jerusalem with the intent of rallying the people to rebuild the walls. After surveying the situation, Nehemiah called the leaders of the people, the high priests and elders together and here is what he said. **“Then I said to them, ‘You see the trouble we are in: Jerusalem lies in ruins, and its gates have been burned with fire. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, and we will no longer be in disgrace.’ They replied, ‘Let us start rebuilding.’ So they began this good work.” Nehemiah 2:17-18**

Nehemiah and the people set out to rebuild the walls and gates of the city. It was a significant undertaking. Next Sunday we are going to talk about the spiritual significance of rebuilding the walls and gates and how that is important in our own personal lives. This morning I just want to share some overly simple truths about building.

Look at Nehemiah 3. The people said “let us start rebuilding” and the very next chapter Nehemiah begins to list the individuals and families, and the groups from various cities that began the work. With great detail Nehemiah lists the gates and sections of wall that were repaired and rebuilt. For instance, look at verse 3. **“The Fish Gate was rebuilt by the sons of Hassenaah. They laid its beams and put its doors and bolts and bars in place. Meremoth son of Uriah, the son of Hakkoz, repaired the next section. Next to him Meshullam son of Berekiah...next to him...” Nehemiah 3:3-4** The list goes on and on. Section after section of the wall is rebuilt as is one gate after another.

While nothing is said about the plans for rebuilding the walls and gates, as methodical and detailed as Nehemiah was, I have to believe there was a plan in place for how these repairs were to be made. Which leads me to the first point.

If you are going to build, you need a good set of plans. We've got plans from all the building we've done here since 1967 when we first built on the site. Here are the plans for the current building program drawn by our architects, Gary Armbruster and Brandon Conklin of M.A. Plus Architecture in Oklahoma City. Because these were the architects that rebuilt the facility after the tornado in 1999, they knew us, knew our building, knew our heart, so they knew what we needed. The plans they gave us do more than provide an idea of what the building will look like. The plans provide more than just a suggestion for building. They give us the step by step details for how to build the building we want. It's this simple: If you are going to build this building, you need to follow these plans. Let me put it this way: **A wise builder follows the architect's plans.**

The application is pretty simple and straightforward isn't it? We have a good set of plans for the life we are supposed to live, given to us by God himself. He is the Creator, the grand designer of our lives. Proverbs says **"By wisdom the Lord laid the earth's foundations, by understanding he set the heavens in place."** **Proverbs 3:19** The bible even refers to God as an "architect and builder" in Hebrews 11:10. If he is the master architect, the designer, creator and builder of the universe, isn't it fair to assume that qualifies him to be the master architect and designer for each of us? Don't you think we could trust him with the plans he has for us? He knows exactly who you are. He designed you. He knows your purpose, your potential, your reason for being. If you've been struggling with trying to find fulfillment and purpose, maybe you've been working off the wrong set of plans. Maybe you've been trying to build your life off of a cheap design of your own with an incomplete, inadequate set of plans. Trust the master architect. Trust his plans for you.

That verse that Pastor Jeff quotes to the youth so often from Jeremiah 29:11, that was addressed to the exiles that were living in Babylon, the exiles, like Nehemiah, that were going to return to Israel and to Jerusalem after 70 years in exile. **"For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you and**

will bring you back from captivity.” Jeremiah 29:11-13. That was God’s promise and plan for them. I’m just telling you that you can trust the plans God has for you. Even if you’ve messed up and found yourself in exile, a long way from God’s original intent and plan, if you will call upon him and commit to building your life according to his plans, his design, he will bring you back and rebuild what had been damaged and destroyed by sin and bad choices.

God created you with a good plan. The Psalmist wrote, **“For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made... My frame was not hidden from you...your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.” Psalm 139:13-16**

God created you, designed you, ordained a path full of potential for you. He created you with a plan and a purpose. All your days have been written in his book before one of them came to be. Trust me when I tell you God has a good set of plans for your life. If you are going to build the life you were meant to have, a life of meaning and purpose, if you want to live the life that will bring you fulfillment, you need to have the right set of plans and you need to follow them. You won’t find fulfillment or joy or peace if you try building with any other set of plans besides the one’s He designed for you! Where do we find the plans? God’s word is a good place to start. Let me give you a couple of examples of how literally God expected his people to obey his word and follow the plans he had for them.

God told the Israelites, **“Be careful to follow every command I am giving you today, so that you may live and increase and may enter and possess the land that the Lord promised on oath to your forefathers.” Deuteronomy 8:1.** Moses told the people to obey God’s word. **“They are not just idle words for you- they are your life. By them you will live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to possess.” Deuteronomy 32:47**

Or take a look at Psalm 119. Over and over the Psalmist extolls the benefit and virtue of living according to God’s word, his law, his instruction.

V9 “How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word.” Living according to his word will keep your way pure and keep you out of trouble.

V24 “Your statutes are my delight, they are my counselors.” If you need wisdom, God’s word is a counselor to guide you.

V45 “I will walk about in freedom for I have sought out your precepts.” Real freedom is found in obeying God’s word and living according to his plans for your life.

V93 “I will never forget your precepts, for by them you have preserved my life.” God’s word will literally protect and preserve and save your life.

V98 “Your commands make me wiser than my enemies, for they are ever with me. I have more insight than all my teachers for I meditate on your statutes. I have more understanding than the elders for I obey your precepts.”

V165 “Great peace have they who love your law and nothing can make them stumble.”

Here is the right set of plans for your life. God’s word. Live your life by these commands, these plans and you’ll know that great peace the Psalmist was talking about. Here is the second simple truth.

It does no good to have a set of plans if you don’t build with them! Think about Nehemiah again. The Israelites had returned to Jerusalem but almost 150 years had gone by and they still hadn’t done anything about the walls and the gates of the city. They had rebuilt the temple finally and had begun to worship again, but they neglected the rebuilding of the city walls and gates. Just because you have a set of plans doesn’t mean the building gets built. Plans don’t build buildings, people build buildings.

We’ve got a set of plans but if we don’t rise up and build we will just have a mess outside with nothing to show for it. The same is true for all of us. We’ve got a set of plans right here in God’s word, but if we don’t start living by God’s word and obeying God’s word, it won’t do us any good.

Just because you own a bible or have it on your phone, or just because you come to church on Sunday and listen to someone preach from the bible, it doesn’t do you much good unless you start to obey God’s word. James wrote, **“Do not merely listen to the word and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.” James 1:22** Don’t just boast about the great set of plans you’ve got, build something! Rise up and build. Put the plans into action. Repair the gates and rebuild the walls. Get the job done. It’s time for you to start living by God’s word. It’s time to start bearing fruit. Pick up the plans, study them and then get busy building!

We’ve got a good set of plans. God’s word tells us everything we need to know. We are taking steps to actually build. We aren’t going to just listen to the word we are going to actually do what it says. Here is the next simple truth for us, **Stick to the plans and build according to**

God's specifications. Here is the hard truth: some things are non-negotiable when it comes to building. Subcontractors get the set of plans and study them to figure out how they are going to build what the plans call for. It shows running the electrical line from that point to this point but once you look at the actual building you think, "what if we run it along this beam and then we come out right here? Will that work as well and not be seen?" Some things are negotiable but some things aren't. The electric line has to be there but how much cable is negotiable.

There may be some things in your life that are negotiable but some things aren't. The electrician may be able to run the wires a little differently, but the guy that is supplying the steel for the lobby structure, he doesn't get to say, "I thought sixteen and a half feet would be just as good as the 18 feet the plans called for." That's non-negotiable.

Our problem with a lot of things is we've decided God's plans for us are negotiable. We act as if we can decide what works best for us and how we want to do it.

Suppose we think of God's word as the ruler, the measuring rod for our lives. My uncle Bud was a finish carpenter. He always said to measure twice and cut once. If you are going to build a house, or build a church, you have to measure with the right ruler and then measure again and then cut once. When it comes to our life, we need to apply God's word, measure and then measure again and then make the cut. Our problem is we've been just "eye-balling" things, making the decisions however we please. "The plans call for an eight foot wall here. Well, that looks like it's about eight foot to me. I'll just go ahead and cut it here." Then we take the next two by four and do the same thing, "That looks like it's about eight foot." The result is we've got measurements all over the place, everywhere from seven foot to nine foot. No wonder the wall is a mess, because we've been deciding what's right for us without using the ruler.

You get the picture. We've been deciding what's right for us. "We don't need God to tell us how to build our life. We know how to live. We know what's right for us." "I can build my life just fine. I don't need a bible or a preacher or God to tell me how to build. Hand me that two by four and that saw. Yeah, that looks like eight foot to me." And off we go, building something that will never endure, never stand. Look at what you are building! Proverbs says, **"There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death." Proverbs 14:12** You've got to stick to God's plans, God's specifications. Don't mess with the non-negotiables in your life. It matters that you build with God's specs and God's plans.

One last simple truth. **You are going to live in what you build!** Here is a really good reason to build according to God's plans and to use good material in the process: you are going to have to live in whatever you build. "It doesn't matter what kind of material you use, just throw any old thing up there." It may not matter for the first month, or even the first year, but pretty soon it starts to fall down around you. You are going to live with the consequences of your choices. You are going to live in what you build. If you are a parent, your children are going to live in that building as well. What are you building? What material are you using? Are you building according to God's design or just however you want to build? You are going to have to live with those choices. You are going to have to live in those choices. It matters!

God has a plan for you and for your life. Stop fighting and surrender to his plan. I promise you won't regret it, but the choice is still yours.

I know these are simple truths, but they have profound implications for our lives and eternal consequences. Are you ready to rise and build according to God's plans for your life? It's time to say "Yes" to the Master Architect of your life!