



RE:BUILDING

Structure & Substance

Sunday 21st June 2026

Nehemiah 7:5-6

Nehemiah had a huge challenge that needed a prompt but organised response. The city was all but empty, next to no inhabitants. All structure and no substance. Whether we are talking about the city of our God or the church Christ is building, we must have both structure and substance.

1 Without substance the structure is an empty façade that is all intentions and no actions. Without structure, our substance becomes aimless and loses its purpose.

In Genesis 1 God creates the structure. In Genesis 2 God creates the substance. In Genesis 3 Satan destroys the substance, and the slow death of the structure follows, which is where we are today. However, we are not without hope. God purposed the cross, and the tomb, to create a structure used to redeem us. The substance was Christ Himself – killed on your cross; buried in your tomb; resurrected by your now-Father in heaven.

2 In Nehemiah 2:12b we read,

And I told no one what my God had put into my heart to do for Jerusalem.

3 The Lord put it into Nehemiah's heart to rebuild the walls – the structure. Now in Nehemiah 7:5 we read,

Then my God put it into my heart to assemble the nobles and the officials and the people to be enrolled by genealogy. And I found the book of the genealogy of those who came up at the first, and I found written in it:

The Lord puts it into Nehemiah's heart to rebuild the substance.

4 A city cannot deliver its purpose without substance – the people. Both structure and substance must be of the Lord.

5 The Nehemiah project parallels the construction of the church in 1 Peter 2:5 where we read,

you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

Only we, in Christ, are both the structure and substance. But there is an important curiosity we should look at – ‘living stones’. ‘Living’ because

6 **Ephesians 2:4-5** tells us,

But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—

7 Christ did not die to improve you, but to make you alive!! **‘Stones’ because you are not designed to be alone** you are all together being built into a spiritual house says Peter.

8 Nehemiah found this record and knew its value as the Lord had put this into his heart. **We desperately need the Lord to put into our hearts the thing He wants us to focus on** and use for His purposes.

9 This generation is being destroyed for the tyranny of choice. And this is the only antidote! In **Luke 10:40** it says this,

But Martha was distracted with much serving. And she went up to him and said, “Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me.”

10 Jesus did not visit these sisters for the cleanliness of their house, the quality of the food, or the timeliness of supper, but **to be present with them so they could be present with Him.**

11 Nehemiah’s situation was very defined and very different from what most of us face. So let’s turn to **Psalms 37:1-2** to see how this process works out practically.

Fret not yourself because of evildoers; be not envious of wrongdoers!
² For they will soon fade like the grass and wither like the green herb.

Fretting is that urgent feeling that I need to do, say, or fix something now. I need to get busier than the next person. And the feeling that if the Christian doesn’t speak up then all is lost.

12 Christian do not fret because of the world around you. Remember Jesus was delayed and someone died (**Mark 5:35-36**).

While he was still speaking, there came from the ruler's house some who said, "Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Teacher any further?"

³⁶ But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the ruler of the synagogue, "Do not fear, only believe."

You can only do the will of God by refusing the hurry of this world.

13 **Psalm 37:3** instructs us,

Trust in the Lord, and do good; dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness.

This is the order of living – trust then do. Jesus first command to his disciples was come follow (Mark 1:17). Jesus last command to His disciples was go make (Matthew 28:19).

14 **Trust in the Lord. Then do good.** That is the order of the gospel. If you are stuck on doing good to be accepted, you need to put down that burden you were never asked to carry. And do the first thing. Proverbs 3:5-6 instructs us to trust in the Lord with all our hearts.

15 And then the best bit of all in **Psalm 37:4**,

Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart.

16 **Time with the Lord will leave you joyful and wanting more of Him and less of this world.** In practical terms it does two things. It decreases the wrong desires and increases the right desires. This verse is not saying you can have whatever you want, but you can have whatever He is.

When you find someone struggling and you don't know what to do. Ask the Lord put it in your heart to provide the words and direction.

Do not be all substance and no structure – a clanging cymbal if you will.

For those addicts who need a dopamine hit found in fixing others. Stop and ask what has the Lord put into my heart?

17 The church cannot be something you simply go to, or, attend. **Each of you living stones must be built up into a spiritual house.**