



*"For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." -2 Corinthians 5:21*

Perhaps you're familiar with the scene of Lucy holding a football for Charlie Brown to run and kick. This happens numerous times throughout the comics and cartoons, and almost every time what is the result? Lucy pulls the ball away at the last second and Charlie Brown launches himself into the air and gets hurt in the process. This happens so frequently, that it almost becomes predictable.

While Nehemiah predates the Peanuts comic strip by thousands of years, he certainly understood the feeling of a cycle continuing to repeat itself. He had worked and prayed for the restoration of Jerusalem, not only for the walls but for the people. They had heard the Word again. They had recommitted to the covenant. And yet, Nehemiah returns back there after the rebuilding is done and he finds that they're again worshipping other gods. They haven't remained faithful to their promises. He probably should have seen that coming because it happened so many times before. You can just image Nehemiah seeing this and going, "Come on guys! You had ONE job!" It would be really easy to him to just walk away. He did his part. He did his best.

But instead of giving up, Nehemiah calls the people to repentance. And God's Word does what it does best: change hearts and lives. The people again respond to God's Word and again return to the right path. Nehemiah wasn't going to give up on God's people, because God hadn't either. He continually calls His people to repentance, to turn away from sin and be forgiven, restored, and walk in the newness of life in the Lord.

Therein lies the key for sustained rebuilding in life. It's really just realizing as Luther said in the first of his famous 95 Theses: "The entire life of the Christian is to be one of repentance." In our own rebuilding times of life, it can easy to worry if we're going to be stuck in a negative cycle where things never actually improve or change. This can even happen after positive changes in our lives. We put together some good habits, we "reset" to a healthier normal, and think it will be smooth sailing from here on out. And then we run into difficulties. We get hurt again and can find ourselves wondering, "Was it all worth it?" or "Should I keep going?" The resounding message of Scripture is: "Yes! God has not given up on you. Because it's not about you. It's about Him. And He will continue to rebuild, restore, and renew you."

Nehemiah closes the whole book by saying, "Remember me, O my God, for good" (Nehemiah 13:17). But we have a promise even greater than being remembered for our own good: "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Corinthians 5:21). Instead of being remembered for our good, in the eyes of God, we are remembered because of Christ's perfect goodness. That's why God doesn't give up on you ever. That's why we can have hope in the midst of rebuilding, life change, and transitions. Because He is faithful. Because He is good. For you, now and always.

**Prayer:** God, you are faithful. Thank you for not giving up on me. Continue to call me to repentance through Your Word. Grant me your Holy Spirit to change my heart that I may always, in His strength, return to you. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

#### **Journal Prompts:**

-How does repentance play a key role in any life change, transition, or rebuilding process?

-How does the promise of eternal life in the restored new creation give us hope when we face difficult cycles of continued sin or difficulty?