

# **Nehemiah: Rebuilding Physically & Spiritually**

**John W. Murray  
Bible Evangelism  
Hatfield, Pennsylvania**

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## **Abstract**

A five-session series on the book of Nehemiah, taught by Dr. Jack W. Murray, of Bible Evangelism, Hatfield, Pennsylvania. The series was given at the Word of Life Bible Conference in Schroon Lake, New York in 1974.

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## **About the Author**

John Weir "Jack" Murray (1914-1996) was born in Laurium, Michigan, the son of a copper miner. He was raised in Bellingham, Washington. He studied at the Bible Institute of Los Angeles, graduated from Wheaton College (1936) with a bachelor's degree in philosophy, and from Faith Theological Seminary (1940) with a master of divinity degree. In later years, having received honorary doctorates from Faith Seminary and from Bob Jones University, he came to be known popularly as Dr. Jack Murray.

Dr. Murray helped found Harvey Cedars Bible Conference (in New Jersey) in 1941, where he served as Director until 1962. He also participated in the founding of Clearwater Christian College (1966, in Florida) and was co-founder of Biblical Theological Seminary (1971, in Pennsylvania), where he served as Chairman of the Board.

He was President of Shelton College in New Jersey from 1955 to 1960, when he resigned to found Bible Evangelism, an evangelistic ministry which he headed up until he retired in 1993. During a career of over 50 years, he was an evangelistic speaker over the radio and in person in many parts of the US and abroad. He served as pastor of four churches in New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Illinois, of which the most notable was the Church of the Open Door, in Philadelphia (and later, Fort Washington).

## Introduction

We're going to be dealing in these five mornings with Nehemiah, a rather unusual book as far as Bible study is concerned. We've divided the book of Nehemiah into four main divisions. Each one of these divisions begins with the letter "V". The second division is two-fold in nature.

### 1. **Vision in Prayer** —Nehemiah 1

Chapter 1 is a miniature of the whole. What happens to one man in chapter one then happens to thousands of people in the rest of the book. But a proper understanding of chapter one will give us a miniature of the whole and will help you to understand the entire book of Nehemiah.

### 2. **Valiant for the Truth** (Jeremiah 9:3) and **Valiant in Fight** (Hebrews 11:34)—Nehemiah 2-7

The second division is two-fold. You will immediately recognize that one is a positive expression—**Valiant for the Truth**. The other is a negative expression—**Valiant in Fight**. But they are both very necessary. Perhaps I can best illustrate this if you've got a dollar bill. If you've got a dollar bill in your purse or wallet, dig it out and look at it for a moment. If you look at the bottom of the great American eagle emblem you'll find that the bird is clutching on one hand the olive branch and on the other hand the bundle of arrows. I don't know whether you've ever made a study of this emblem. What does the olive branch represent? Peace. What does the bundle of arrows represent? War, and preparedness for war. So you have the positive and the negative aspects of our national picture. Now this is a good representation of Christian living. Sometimes people get the idea that when they come to Christ they are a carefully wrapped package stamped this side up, fragile and bound for heaven. I've got news for you. You have entered into a fight which you have never known before. You have entered into what Paul calls war, a good warfare, or again: "Fight the good fight of faith. Lay hold on eternal life."

In the book of Nehemiah chapters 2-7 we have both the positive aspects and the negative aspects of Christian living. In Nehemiah they could be represented, not by an American eagle, the olive branch nor the bundle of arrows, but by the trowel and sword. The trowel represents BUILDING, the sword represents BATTLING: **Building and Battling!**

Now I'm a realist not an idealist. We must face things as we find them; and in the Christian life there is building and battling. Let me give you an illustration from the New Testament. When Paul went into the Roman colony, the city of Philippi, there was no synagogue. His custom usually was to go to the synagogue and there, from the Old Testament scriptures, he opened and alleged that Jesus is the long-promised, anointed One of the Old Testament. But of course there was no synagogue in Philippi. He found some women who were having a prayer meeting by the river side. The Bible says that Paul spoke, and there was a woman there by the name of Lydia "whose heart the Lord opened, and she attended unto the things which were spoken by

Paul." We have the first convert in Europe. We have the conversion not only of Lydia but of her whole household. In fact, the household of Lydia became the place of the infant church in Philippi, the meeting place. Everybody says, "Oh isn't it marvelous to be able to do Christian work just like that, just like going out into the orchard and touching that ripe plum and letting it drop into your hand. Everybody likes to do Christian work like that.

If you stop in the sixteenth chapter of Acts with that story, you only have part of it. It wasn't very long after that until they passed a booth in the city where there was a demon-possessed girl. And the demon said, "These men (speaking of Paul and Silas) are servants of the Most High God who show unto you the way of salvation." This demonic testimony was annoying to Paul; so he pointed his finger at the girl and spoke to the demon, "I command thee in the name of Jesus to come out of her," and the strange futuristic powers of this girl were forever thwarted. Those men who were gaining great wealth from her fantastic predictions caught Paul and Silas and drew them into the market place, accused them with a three-fold false accusation, and then had them beaten and put in the inner prison. But it was in the inner prison where Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises to God. It was in the inner prison that the jailor cried, "What must I do to be saved?" You say, "I don't like to do Christian work that way, with my back bleeding and in the inner prison." But who are you to tell God how He's going to do His work?

One is the scene of positive action—building, beautiful, constructive, lovely—a great deal of Christian work is that way. But a great deal of Christian work is not that way. It's in the battle. It's in the blood, sweat and tears. It's in the inner prisons. Ask the Christians behind the Iron Curtain. Ask the Christians behind the Bamboo Curtain. Ask the Christians behind the Sugar Cane Curtain [Cuba]. They're in the aspect of battling. Now this is what we find in the book of Nehemiah. This is great truth. The principles of Nehemiah, of course, are all amplified in the New Testament. But we find their basics in Nehemiah.

### **3. Victory in Revival—Nehemiah 8-12**

You are going to see in the book of Nehemiah what most Bible teachers feel is the finest example of public spiritual awakening, otherwise known as revival, in the whole Bible. It is a fantastic picture. What happens to one man in chapter one happens to some fifty thousand people in chapters eight through twelve. It would seem that, inasmuch as revival has been won, we ought to say that they lived happily ever after, and go on home. This is the way to close it out. But that's not the way the Bible closes it out. Chapter thirteen is a single division also.

### **4. Vigilance Forever—Nehemiah 13**

The great revival which was won in chapters eight through twelve is lost in chapter thirteen and regained again. The book ends on a note of vigilance.

Now let's go into the setting. "The words of Nehemiah the son of Hachaliah. And it came to pass in the month Chisleu, in the twentieth year, as I was in Shushan the palace." This is what we call the post-captivity period.

In Old Testament history, we find a period of time immediately following what we call the seventy-years captivity. God sent His people into captivity because of their apostasy. He punished them with seventy years of judgment. Then immediately following these seventy years, we have activity. Now this activity has begun a whole century before we come to Nehemiah. These are what we call the post-captivity books: Ezra, Esther and Nehemiah. The corresponding prophets are: Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi. In the book of Ezra we find the decree of Cyrus, where God works in the heart of this great Persian king. He decrees that the temple should be rebuilt. Two outstanding leaders are found in these first six chapters of Ezra, Zerubbabel, the governmental leader and Joshua, the priestly leader. These two came and some fifty thousand people came with them. In the third chapter of Ezra they laid the foundations of the temple. There was joy. There was weeping. Of course, the foundation of the temple, the post-captivity temple, or what we call in scholarship the second temple period, was inferior to the great temple of Solomon. Some of the older people who had remembered the great beauty of Solomon's temple wept. But it was a true temple. Remember that the Samaritans came and resisted the building of the temple, and so the building stopped. The foundation was there, but that was all.

Then two mighty preachers of the gospel came along. One by the name of Zechariah; he was the prophet of encouragement. The other was Haggai; he was the prophet of rebuke. These two men teamed up and came into the company of the exiles and stirred them up. They began to build again in spite of opposition. By the end of the sixth chapter of Ezra we have the completion of the post-captivity temple. Now this again is some seventy years before the events of Nehemiah.

Between chapters six and seven of Ezra there is a span of some fifty or sixty years of unrecorded events. Beginning at chapter seven through chapter ten we have the actual ministry of Ezra as he comes back with a smaller contingent. I wish I could teach the book of Ezra. It's a great book of revival. The last four chapters of Ezra reveal tremendous spiritual movements in Jerusalem. Then after that, you have a twelve-year period from the end of Ezra until the beginning of the book of Nehemiah.

Now I hope that has not been too rapid, and I hope you've got it just a little bit. But Nehemiah is coming on the scene now, one hundred years after the first activity of the post-captivity period.

# Chapter One

## VISION IN PRAYER

### Nehemiah 1

The Bible says in Nehemiah chapter one that he was in Shushan the palace. He was still in the capital of Persia. What was he doing in the capital of Persia? The last word of chapter one tells us: "For I was the king's cupbearer." Now let's get this straight about the king's cupbearer. He was no simple servant. He was not simply a male waiter. Not at all. This man was one of the most trusted members of the Persian court. He was like Daniel, a companion of kings. He was the man who stood many times between death and the king by poisoning, by plots, and by many kinds of intrigue.

Nehemiah was not a profligate. He was not a prodigal. He was not one down on his luck. He was not one out of the scenes of sin. No! Nehemiah was a very prominent, outstanding, accomplished, affluent layman. The book Nehemiah—you laymen ought to be encouraged—is not a book about a preacher, not a book about a priest, not a book about a prophet. He's a layman, and he's a very wealthy layman! He had everything he wanted—position, wealth, comfort, etc. Don't get the picture of him as shackled in a ball and chain. He wasn't. He was no more in ball and chain than Daniel. He was outstanding, and a very outstanding spiritual man. He tells the story of what happened to him. This is not the record of a Daniel who in his youth purposed in this heart not to defile himself with the king's meat. Here is a man who has matured.

This is where we begin his story. Not as a child, not as a young man, but as an accomplished, outstanding leader. Apart from the leadership of our Lord Himself, I'm convinced that the lessons of leadership found in Nehemiah are probably greater from the life of this man than any other single man in all the Scriptures. If any of you men want to study leadership, study Nehemiah.

What happened in this setting? The Bible says (verse 2), "That Hanani, one of my brethren, came, he and certain men of Judah; and I asked them concerning the Jews that had escaped, which were left of the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem." Now evidently the flesh-brother of Nehemiah, with some other men, had been to Jerusalem. That was a long journey in those days. One record of that journey covered four months.

Now they had returned to the capital of Persia; and here were people who should have been concerned about the spiritual welfare of God's people in the Old Testament. But most of them were not. Instead most of them were quite settled and comfortable in Persia. Nehemiah inquired about this. He wanted to know what was going on. He had a godly concern about the situation. What was the report which was given to him? "The remnant (of people) that are left of the captivity there in the province are in great affliction and reproach: the wall of Jerusalem also is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire."

Now I could make an hour out of almost every verse. Here I'm doing this in five teaching periods, when it took me four and a half months in my church when I was a pastor. So you know I must leave something out. But notice the emphasis of verse three. It was people first, then bricks. It was the function of people before facility. It wasn't an emphasis on building. It was an emphasis upon spiritual work among people.

Now at the top of my New Scofield Reference Bible here is a theme. And I disagree with the theme of the New Scofield Reference Bible here; not because I disagree with what it says but what it doesn't say. The theme says "Rebuilding Jerusalem's Walls." You say "What in the world is wrong with that?" Nothing, except that it's incomplete. It took only fifty-two days to complete the wall. The term of office of Nehemiah in the period we shall study took twelve years. There is quite a contrast between two months and twelve years.

If you read your Sunday School quarterly, you'll usually find Nehemiah depicted as a glorified contractor: he's a brick builder or a wall builder. Now he was that, but it was only incidentally that, in order to bring about something far greater. So I've added to it. My theme is not only rebuilding Jerusalem's walls, but rebuilding Jerusalem's walls in preparation for spiritual awakening.

This beautiful auditorium [here at Schroon Lake] is just wood, mortar, glass and metal. Every believer in Christ in this room—should the rapture take place while I'm preaching—would be gone. This auditorium would still be here. This is simply something to keep us comfortable—out of the sun in the summer and out of the snow and rain in the winter—while we can do a spiritual function.

By the way, that's all your church building is too. There's nothing more sacred about that wood there than any other piece of wood that's never been taken out of the forest. This pulpit is not a "sacred desk." The only thing that makes it that way is that it upholds the sacred Word of God. You can do that on a chair if you want to. I'm getting kind of fed up with the emphasis on facility and not function. Folks telling me about their beautiful, beautiful, beautiful church. I'm not against beautiful churches. The only reason you've got a beautiful building is to do something with it. Wear it out winning people to Christ. That's what you got it for. Thank God for its beautiful architecture; but it means absolutely nothing unless we're doing what we're doing right now—teaching the Word of God.

So don't get a wrong emphasis here. Don't just get wall building in your mind. There's something greater in the book of Nehemiah than wall building; that is, the remnant, the people, then the wall, then the gates.

Now Nehemiah's reaction—He could've kind of shrugged his shoulders a little bit and said, "Well here I am a captive of a captive people. Here I am hundreds of miles removed from the place that I'm particularly interested in. What can I do?"



So many people are acting that way. So many people have actually determined the need but have not done anything about it. Not Nehemiah. Nehemiah's godly concern: "It came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven."

American fundamentalism almost has lost the practice of fasting. But don't you ever believe that the body of Christ throughout the world has lost the practice of fasting. I can take you to mission fields where so called "necessary food" is put aside for spiritual pursuit. I can take you to places where believers take that which is properly theirs and let it pass by in order to get the truth of God. There's nothing wrong with eating. There's nothing wrong with sleeping. But there's something greater in the line of spiritual truth and that is to take on something far more important—spiritual pursuit of God's objectives. This is the case with Nehemiah. It broke his heart. I think it was the great [Ian] Maclaren, the English expositor, who said, "No man successfully builds the walls until he has wept over the ruins." What does this day of apostasy do to you? When I was a pastor in Philadelphia, we had the greatest Sunday night service in Philly. Thousands upon thousands of servicemen were brought into those auditoriums. Hundreds of them were won to Christ. People used to come to me and say "Isn't this great Jack?" and they just didn't get the reaction from me they expected. I said, "Yes it is, it's really wonderful. But isn't it sad that fifty years ago there were one hundred churches in Philadelphia doing this. But tonight after you leave the service you can drive down Broad Street or out Market Street or along Chestnut Street or Walnut Street and see great facilities built by the prayers, sacrifice and the gifts of God's people, but scarcely any have a light in them on Sunday night." What does it do to you? "So what? Isn't it too bad? It's a different day." Not Nehemiah. It broke his heart.

How long has it been since you wept over the terrible spiritual conditions that are all around us? How long has it been since you actually mourned for the condition of God's work? How long has it been since you've given up something which really, properly belongs to you in order to get at the thing which must be done?

Now let me say a word about this man Nehemiah. I'm going to have a tremendous time when I get to heaven. I'm going to spend a great deal of time with Nehemiah. I've talked about him so much for so many years; and I want to find out a whole lot of things that I don't know, that God didn't choose to reveal.

I don't usually read from my notes, but let me read a few words that I have penned here. "It could be truly said of Nehemiah that the pattern of things 'was shown him in the mount.' One has said the mass of men do not climb mountains. They keep to the level ground and the beaten track. So that anyone who climbs gets the world up there to himself, and Jesus made constant use of this secret. Without this solitude of time and space no great vision of work to be done will ever be obtained. Here is the place where men rise above the noise and the din of the world, where they are lifted into the realm of the patterns to be taken down and made real. So much work today is shallow because it has never been prayed through and thought through in the mount."

Remember that expression about Moses, 'the pattern in the mount'? Everything that Moses put into action in the tabernacle was what he had been given in the mount. He came from the mountains of vision down to the plains of the valiant and put it in action. Now we're dealing with Nehemiah in the mountains of vision.

Nowadays, if a kid goes out in the field, lays on his back, pulls a grass straw, sticks it through his teeth and does it for fifteen minutes while he watches the clouds go by, his parents call for a psychiatrist. People are afraid to be alone. They want to act with everybody else.

You as an individual have a God-given destiny that only you can fulfill. I don't care who you are. I don't care whether you're red or yellow or black or white. I don't care whether you're rich or poor. I don't care whether you're young or old. God has a particular thing for you to do, and you are the only one who is going to find out what it is. May God help you to find out and do it.

I've got five children, and they're all different. All five of them went to college, but each one of them went to a different college. I think each one of them went to that college in the will of God. They're all very, very different. All of God's children are quite different, and God has a place for you. We're talking about one man, and from this one man we're going to get the destiny for him. But you are just as important to God as Nehemiah. You are just as important to the Lord as anyone, even the forgotten Ahithophel, even the not-forgotten David, even the prominent Nehemiah. God has a place for you. I'm going to suggest some principles from this book how you, like Nehemiah, can obtain what God has for you.

A young fellow walked up to me down in Columbia, South Carolina. He said, "You remember me?" I looked at him and said, "No, I don't remember you." He said, "Three years ago you completely convinced me that God was interested in me. I believed what you said. I'm now preparing for the ministry." I wish I could get everybody convinced that God is vitally interested in them and has a peculiar, distinctive, romantic, adventurous life for them. I wish I could get everybody convinced of that.

Nehemiah's prayer—There are four words: call, confess, claim and commit. Now this is a very simple word outline of verses five through eleven of chapter one. We're going to break it down, and I hope you'll like this and will dig into it. Perhaps this will begin your work in a great many other books. All I'm doing is just revealing what is here. I'm not trying to bring something in that isn't here. I told the people in the four different churches I had pastored that if they heard anything from the pulpit which was contrary to the Word of God, they were to meet me in the aisle with an open Bible and challenge me. I have a right to reveal what God has revealed and that is the total.

**CALL** — Let me read the first one and a half verses of that prayer. Verse five and then verse six in its first half. "And said, I beseech thee, O LORD God of heaven, the great and awe-inspiring God, that keepeth covenant and mercy for them that love him and observe his

commandments: Let thine ear now be attentive, and thine eyes open, that thou mayest hear the prayer of thy servant, which I pray before thee now, day and night..."

Nehemiah called upon God. I invite you to do a thorough study of Nehemiah's theology. He's not talking to a heavenly uncle. He's not talking to a big brother upstairs. He's not talking to an ambiguous buddy. He's talking to the eternal God!

"God is a spirit, infinite, eternal, unchangeable in His being wisdom, power, holiness, justice and truth." You'll find nothing inferior about Nehemiah's address to his God. He is the awe-inspiring God. He's the creator of the universe. He is high and lifted up.

The reason we have such a high view of ourselves in this day is because we have such low view of God. Isaiah said, "I saw the Lord high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple." We need a revival of theology. Praise God for all of the great teaching on the Holy Spirit. Praise God for all of the central teaching on Christology. But remember the Bible is also a book of theology—God Himself. And I don't mean to separate the Trinity in any sense. The emphasis here is upon God, the very God, and the unworthiness of this man even to be in His presence. God reminds him that He's a God who keeps His promises—a covenant-keeping God. He's a God of love.

You say, "Preacher, that's New Testament." I've got news for you. That is eternal truth. Of course, it is exemplified in He who is Love (the Christ) and amplified in all of the epistle teaching. The Bible teaches "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart." The Bible also teaches "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," and that isn't reserved to the New Testament. That's back here in the book of Nehemiah. God loved Nehemiah, and Nehemiah loved God. It isn't something new to be in love with the Lord. Nehemiah loved the Lord, and that's why he came to Him.

Sometimes congregations invite me as an evangelist and they kind of think, "Well, Jack's got in his briefcase everything that's needed to bring about a spiritual awakening. We've got a wonderful leader"—that's the attitude. Revival isn't worked up by man, it's sent down by God. It isn't man-engendered, it's God-sent. Nehemiah began where he should begin. He began with God. You can't do better. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." That's the proper priority!

CONFESS — Nehemiah saw himself as he really was. You can compare yourself to every other Christian in this place and come up a little better than some of them—maybe all of them—I don't know. But your task is not to see whether you're on a level with somebody else. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." Isaiah, when he saw that One high and lifted up in vision, said, "I am a man of unclean lips, and I live in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts."

Now we see Nehemiah look at himself just as he should see himself. He began to confess his sins. He said, "I confess the sins of thy servant, the children of Israel, which we have sinned

against thee: both I and my father's house have sinned. We have dealt very corruptly with thee, and have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the ordinances, which thou commandest thy servant Moses. Remember, I pray thee, the word that thou commandest thy servant Moses, saying, If ye transgress, I will scatter you abroad among the peoples."

We need a revival of private confession: every believer, before God, confessing his sins of thought, word and act. We need a revival of confession of a personal nature, that when we have wronged or erred against some other person we ought to go to that person and be willing to ask their forgiveness, humble ourselves and confess to one another.

Then there is public confession—as we'll find in the book of Nehemiah—where their sin was an aspect of the crowd and so was the confession, as they confessed and got right. I've been in meetings like this, great meetings. I've been in meetings twelve hours in length where people stood for as long as two hours to get their chance to get right with the whole assembled church. I shall never forget those scenes, and I'll thank God for them. This is confession.

CLAIM — You say, "Preacher, I'm praying and asking God for true Biblical awakening; and as far as I know I've confessed. I've put everything under the blood. I'm right with God. I'm right with man. I'm not perfect. I'm pardoned. I'm cleansed. I've done this." And then you've stopped. You've stopped too soon.

Remember Nehemiah is a man who prayed for revival and got it. Would you like to follow him? Claim! Look in verse nine. "But if ye turn unto me, and keep my commandments, and do them; though there were of you cast out unto the uttermost part of the heaven, yet will I gather them from there, and will bring them into the place that I have chosen to set my name." What's that mean? It means this—God said if you sin, I will punish. But God also said if you will obey, I will bless.

In that delightful little daily devotional book, which when you've got a broken heart you'll appreciate, *Streams in the Desert* [by Lettie Burd (Mrs. Charles E.) Cowman], you'll find a sentence that's worth the whole book. It says, "When we begin to obey, God begins to bless." Now this isn't a strange truth. This isn't some deeper aspect of victorious living. This is all through the Scriptures. This is a foundation truth. There's not a person in this room who claims to be a Christian who could claim to be a Christian without Biblical authority.

Don't come down to me and say, "I'm a Christian because I have that feeling deep down in my heart." Well I have it many times too. But it's not always there. Does that mean I'm lost? No. A little boy came to one of my meetings. I said, "Son, what did you do?" "Why, I opened my heart and received the Lord Jesus as my Savior." "Great! Did you ask Him to come into your heart? How come?" "Oh, I feel all clean inside!" I couldn't leave that boy alone. Why? Tomorrow morning he might feel all dirty inside. Does that mean he's lost tomorrow morning and saved this morning? No, I had to come back to him, and I said, "Son, how do you know?" "Well he said, 'Behold I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in and sup with him.'" I said, "You asked Jesus to come into your heart? How

do you know He came in?" He looked at me as if I was a dumbest thing that ever entered his church. Really, I mean this. He looked right at me, my daughter Sarah had brought him to me after she'd counseled with him. He looked at me and said, "Sir, He came into my heart because He said He would and He never tells us a lie." Boy, he had it! "Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God." That verse is not "faith cometh by feeling."

There's only one man in the Old Testament that trusted feeling, and he was wrong; that was Isaac. He felt the wrong boy. You can think that one over as long as you want to. Feelings can be very, very uncertain. Yes, they can. But as we admit the Truth, we begin the Christian life by claiming the Scripture as a basis of our salvation. Why do we forsake it after that? Why don't we confront the Christian life claiming, as well as getting into the Christian life claiming? "What do you mean, preacher?" Well, if a verse of scripture is good enough to save you from hell, every promise in the Book is good enough to keep you living victorious. Let's not forsake God's truth. This is an old truth. This isn't some new aspect of Christian living. Nehemiah said, "Lord you said that if we sinned, you'd punish us; but you also said if we obeyed, you'd bring us back and I'm going to hold you to it." I'm not being irreverent when I say that.

"Faith, mighty faith, the promise sees, and looks to God alone;  
Laughs at impossibilities, and cries it shall be done.  
And cries it shall, it shall be done, and cries it shall be done.  
Laughs at impossibilities, and cries it shall be done."

Why? God said it. Here's a man hundreds of miles removed from the place he once blessed—a captive? Impossible? No, it is not impossible. I'm going to claim the promises of God.

Let me give you a little illustration: Years ago I used to stop in New York between trains. We don't do that anymore. But the old 34th street station, I never minded being there. In fact, I always still do love the old trains. But anyway, I used to sit there, and there was a whole row of doors between the ticket offices and the concourse. All these doors, in that day, were opened by that little light beam. Remember? How you had a little light beam and when you broke that little light ray, what happened? The door opened. Practically everybody here has gone through a door like that. But I used to watch the people going through those doors. There must have been twenty of them across the concourse. The first thing that amused me was so many people who saluted when they went through. Why? They didn't believe the thing was going to work. Then just as soon as they broke that little light beam, the door went open. You ought to see how fast they pulled their hand down. But they really didn't believe that thing was going to work. They had to touch something. They had to feel it. But it worked.

Then I remember going into the turnpike restroom and washing my hands and looking around for the towels. No towels. What in the world kind of restroom is this? There's a white box in those days on the wall that said to dry hands put hands under box. Whoever heard of drying your hands under a box? You didn't want to make a fool of yourself, so you checked out to see if there's anybody else in there. Sure enough, right underneath that white box was that little beam of light and just as soon as you shoved your hands up there — buzzzzzzzzzz. You got all

the heat you wanted. Worked, didn't it? But you could stand there all day, and say "I don't believe it. I don't believe it." You never could prove it; you never claimed it.

The best one is the drinking fountain —nothing to step on and nothing to turn. It just says, drink. Right across the top of that fountain was that little beam of light. Now you do look around and see if anybody is going to watch you. You don't want to be caught sucking on a dry nozzle. Sure enough, it turned on just as soon as you drop your head down there. But most of the time you went up, looked around and put your hand up there first and got it wet.

You'd never get it unless you obeyed it. Now some of you are never going to get it, unless you're going to believe it. If there's a dear one here today who has never trusted Christ, you'll never have salvation unless you claim what God said. Christian, think of all the things you're missing by not claiming.

Here's a man in an impossible situation. He said, "I believe it. I believe God who scattered us can also restore us. I'm going to lay claim to the promises of God." All the rest of the book is the amplification of it.

COMMIT — In the light of this, Nehemiah says this (verse 10), "Now these are thy servants and thy people, whom thou hast redeemed (talking about the Lord's people) by thy great power, and by thy strong hand. O Lord, I beseech thee, let now thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servant, and to the prayer of thy servants, who delight to fear thy name: and prosper, I pray thee, thy servant this day, and grant him (speaking about himself) mercy in the sight of this man. For I was the king's cupbearer."

We find in these verses that Nehemiah personally made a complete and absolute commitment to God's providence, destiny, sovereignty and guidance. He, as it were, drew a circle around him and said, "Lord, take everything inside this circle. I want to put myself at your disposal. Now you do with me what you want to do." The thrilling thing in the whole book is what God did with the man who made that full commitment.

## **Chapter Two**

### **VALIANT FOR THE TRUTH**

### **and VALIANT IN FIGHT**

### **Nehemiah 2-7**

#### **1. God's Delay**

The first thing in chapter two is the evidence of the answered prayer that we found in the last few verses of chapter one. "And it came to pass in the month Nisan..." Notice in verse one of chapter one, the month of Chisleu; these are two names of months in the Hebrew calendar, and this represents a gap of about four months. So the prayer of Nehemiah in chapter one is delayed for four months. We can see behind the scenes when Nehemiah, as an individual and with his companions (because there's evidence of the fact that others joined him in prayer), prayed very earnestly for God to do something in this situation. It seemed utterly impossible.

They were hundreds of miles removed from the thing that they wanted touched. Nehemiah was a captive and had no permission whatsoever to leave this valuable post as the king's cupbearer. But they prayed, prayed and kept on praying. God delayed that prayer for four long months. Then something happened. The Bible tells us that one day when Nehemiah was doing his usual job, "...Wine was before the king: and I took up the wine, and gave it unto the king. Now I had not been sad in his presence. Wherefore the king said unto me, Why is thy countenance sad, seeing thou art not sick? this is nothing but sorrow of heart. Then I was very sore afraid..." (Nehemiah 2:1-3).

The cupbearer to the king was a very remarkable individual. He was not simply a taster, a servant, or a waiter. He was the most trusted man in the Persian court. Not only was he this, but he was also to have a manner that would be pleasing to the king.

You'll remember King Saul in the Old Testament, when he became sour, depressed and disconsolate, they brought young David in to play music on his harp in order to lift up the spirits of King Saul. Well, something of that is seen here; Nehemiah was in the presence of the king in order to be a help to him.

Now that's not an unknown quality. You know people that you just like to be with because they do something for you. Also, it's the portion of many people that it's a drag to be with people who are depressed and disconsolate. It takes something out of you. This king had been in the presence of Nehemiah—and Nehemiah had been in the presence of the king—so long that immediately the king recognized that something was bothering Nehemiah. He knew it wasn't physical sickness, and he recognized it and made it known. The Bible says, "Then I was sore afraid." Why? He was not supposed to be sad in the presence of the king. Caught in this kind of situation, he answered with the truth.

The other day I listened to a message from a young preacher by the name of George William Murray [Dr. Murray's son], a missionary to Italy, and he was dealing with answered prayer. It was so good! He's been borrowing my sermons so long, I decided to borrow one of his. George had four points, and they were real good points. His point was that God always in one way or another answers prayer. One way He answers prayer is, first of all, **directly**.

Many of you have had wonderful direct answers to prayer. I won't take the time to explain the fact that God answers prayer directly, because it's too obvious. Sometimes He answers prayer overnight, sometimes in the most spectacular way in just the way you ask it; but it's direct answer to prayer.

However, there are those prayers which are answered **differently**. Some years ago I prayed for some kind of a training area for Bible Evangelism Incorporated. I now have a full blown graduate theological seminary today [Biblical Theological Seminary] with over 100 college graduates—some of the most brilliant young men that I know—from some 60 different colleges by the time we get them all together next week. I didn't know God was going to answer my prayer like that. It was very different than what I had contemplated, but He answered it.

Some answers to prayer are **delayed**, and we have that case here in Nehemiah. It was delayed four months. Your prayers are not always answered immediately. But don't interpret God's delays to be God's denials. That is not true. I've heard of George Mueller who prayed for sixty-two years for the salvation of one man. That prayer's answer was delayed!

**Denial** is the fourth way in which prayer is answered. Some people dispute this, but when Junior asks for the car and the father says no, that's an answer—very definitely. Sometimes God answers prayer that way. He says no. Three times Paul lifted his voice to the Lord for the removal of the thorn in his flesh, and God said three times—no. Paul's prayer was answered.

So answers to prayer can be direct, different, delayed or denied. In the book of Nehemiah we're dealing with a prayer that was delayed.

## **2. God's Little Things**

In this day of big crowds and population explosion, we are apt to forget God's little things. Now the case in point here is the look on a man's face. It's really a very little thing whether he's sad or whether he's happy. But this was the key that turned the lock to answer the prayer—such a little thing as the expression on a man's face.

A few months ago at Tennessee Temple, Dr. Lee Robertson, our good friend, called my wife and said, "Eleanor, we want you to come to Chattanooga. We want to feature you at a banquet of 1500 people. We want you to play not only in all of the meetings of Friday, Saturday and Sunday, but we'll also set up a grand piano in the dining room so that you can



play for the students and all of the guests. We want you to be here. We want to honor you for writing a little chorus." I can remember when we got the message. The chorus was "Behold He Comes." Eleanor's reaction was "but it's so simple." At the same time it's one of God's little things. Lee Robertson said that "Behold He Comes" has been the dominant theme of every musical group from Tennessee Temple in the last five or six years. God's little things.

I know of a boy that had some loaves and fishes. It wasn't much — just a lunch. But he put it at God's disposal, and God's been allowing us to talk about him for two thousand years. What if he hadn't given it to Christ? God's little things. Little is much when God is in it.

I have a doctor friend—he is in Glory now and buried in Bethlehem—Dr. Thomas Lamby, one of the greatest missionaries I've ever had the privilege of being with. He told a story one night about being in a compound in Ethiopia. This was before Benito Mussolini came in—and then Benito Mussolini was run out again. He said there was a loud knocking on the compound door one night, and there was a group of Ethiopian soldiers there. The general had a very painful ear. Dr. Lamby, a medical doctor and graduate of medical school at the University of Pittsburgh, looked into the ear with his little light; and he took his forceps and removed a little beetle. The ear had become infected, and he treated it with medicine and dismissed him. It was a very simple thing for a doctor to do. But the next day he was summoned into the presence of Haile Selassie (Emperor of Ethiopia). Why? Because this was that great American doctor who had saved the life of one of his generals. Dr. Lamby knew better, but they said this superstitiously was a wood-boring beetle which would've killed the general. As a result, Dr. Tom Lamby became the head of the Ethiopian Red Cross and built the first large medical hospital in the country. I've heard Dr. Lamby tell this story many times. He says, "If God can use a little beetle, He can use you." God doesn't need much. He just needs the expression on a man's face.

This is a very interesting story. Now here Nehemiah is afraid, but he wasn't supposed to be that way. Sometimes God makes you answer your own prayers. Nehemiah didn't plan it this way. No! But this is the way God made it work. So what did he say? He told the truth. He said, "Let the king live forever: why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' sepulchres lieth waste, and its gates are consumed with fire?" Then the king said unto me, "For what dost thou make request?"

Imagine the king saying, "What do you want?" Now do you want to see one of the shortest prayers in Scripture? Here it is—not even worded, "so I prayed to the God of heaven." Now what do you think Nehemiah did? Do you think he said, "You've caught me unprepared. I didn't expect anything like this. This is a shock. Give me a few hours to think this over." No! The man who spends time on his knees praying privately is the man who knows what to do when he's called upon to pray publicly. I don't think Nehemiah even closed his eyes. I believe inside he said, "O Lord, help me now!"

If Peter had said a prayer, as long as some of our preachers pray, when he stepped out of the boat that day to walk to Jesus, he would've drowned. He cried out for help, and he got it immediately. There's a time when there's a cry in the heart—help me!

### 3. God's Gifts

This was God's time to begin moving in the heart of the king. Do you realize that your marvelous power as a Christian can reach up to the highest human individuals to turn that heart in just the way that God wants it turned? Proverbs says, "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord. He turneth it withersoever He willeth." What a wonderful power in the answer to prayer.

The king asks, and Nehemiah answers: "If it please the king, and if thy servant has found favor in thy sight, that thou wouldest send me unto Judah, unto the city of my fathers' sepulchres, that I may build it." The last point in the prayer of chapter one was a complete commitment, an utter abandonment to God's disposal. Here's the proof of it—Nehemiah didn't look at the king and say, "You know, I think we probably could get some people to go back and do that job." What did he say? He said, "Send me." Now those words are in the sixth chapter of Isaiah too. But they're in the second chapter of Nehemiah, "Send me." His commitment was himself. He said "that I may build..." I want to be involved. I want to get right in the middle of it. I want to be sent!

Now we find the reason for the delay. May I remind you that God's delays are never losses. May I remind you that you never, never wait upon God and it costs you anything. Every moment, every minute, every hour, every day, every week, every year that God causes you to wait to get the answer to that prayer in delay is very, very valuable. By the same token however, any delay that is man-made always costs you something. If you're sitting in this room and you're not saved today, to go on in your sin is costing you misery, heartache, lack of peace, lack of joy and a thousand other things. There's not a person here who wouldn't say "I wish I could've been a Christian longer." I wish somebody would've come to me and put me in the ranch at the age of seven, eight or nine and led me to Christ. I had to wait until I was fifteen. I missed a lot between my early childhood and the time that I was a fifteen year-old teenager.

Paul sounds that word in one of his epistles about one of his relatives. He says "who was in Christ before me." [Rom. 16:7] Christian, if you know what to do in the will of God and you're not doing it, it's costing you something. Man's delays are always very, very costly, but not God's delays. Why? Because in these four months this man was not only praying, he was planning. He was getting ready for his answer to prayer.

He knew what to say when the king said, "What do you want?" The first thing the king asked for was this (verse six), "and the king said unto me, (the queen also sitting by him), for how long shall thy journey be? and when wilt thou return? So it pleased the king to send me; and I

set him a time." He didn't say to the king, "You know, I really don't know how long it's going to take. I never thought about it. It really kind of got me by surprise."

You know what Nehemiah answered? I know it's not in verse six, but I know I'm right because Nehemiah is going to confirm it when I talk to him. Yes he is. He looked into the face of the king and said, "twelve years." I want twelve years of time, sir.

"Moreover I said unto the king, If it please the king, let letters be given to me to the governors beyond the river, that we may pass through till I come into Judah;" King, I can't get through unless you give me clearance. I've got to have a passport. I've got to have a visa. I've got to have permission. I've got to have protocol. All of this was thought through on his knees. So he's asking for it, not only for the period of time but for permission to get there.

"And a letter unto Asaph the keeper of the king's forest, that he may give me timber to make beams for the gates of the palace which is near to the house, and for the wall of the city, and for the house that I shall enter into." I'm going to need wood. I'm going to need supplies. I'm going to have to have the funds necessary to do this great twelve-year job—provision. Then one I don't think Nehemiah asked for; look down in verse nine. "Then I came to the governors beyond the river, and gave them the king's letters. (This was now while he was on his way.) Now the king had sent captains of the army and horsemen with me." Protection! Nehemiah asked for a period of time, permission, provision and protection. Isn't this a marvelous answer to prayer! God answers prayer, and He answered Nehemiah's prayer.

Verse eleven, "So I came to Jerusalem, and was there three days." Living in the wonder of answered prayer is just a marvelous thing.

But now we come to the first element of conflict. Everything is going along fine. Wasn't it marvelous to study all of chapter one and the first nine verses of chapter two and everything is **valiant for the truth**? Things are really moving positively!

But there's also **valiant in fight**; and sooner or later every opportunity that God gives you will be challenged by the devil's opposition. Now get ready for it. I'm not trying to build in you a martyr complex. I despise a martyr complex. Nor am I trying to give you a case of persecutory disillusion, thinking there's something after you when there isn't.

However, I'm giving you the Bible because, as an evangelist, I have dealt with thousands of heart-broken young believers who were shocked about the awful opposition that came into their lives soon after they became Christians. Somehow they felt that because they became Christians, they were going to be a carefully wrapped package, branded "fragile, this side up and bound for heaven." All of a sudden they hit something they never dreamed was there, because someone had not properly warned them of the conflict of the Christian life. "Fight the good fight of faith. Lay hold on eternal life" (1 Timothy 6:12).

Verse ten gives the first element of conflict. "When Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, heard of it (all that God had done in the miraculous leading of Nehemiah unto the place where he was going to build the wall and bring about spiritual awakening), it grieved them exceedingly that there had come a man to seek the welfare of the children of Israel." There are going to be some people that aren't going to like what you're going to be doing for God. There's always going to be a Sanballat, always going to be a Tobiah. A little bit later the third member of this Satanic trinity appears. His name is Geshem, and the enmity is set up.

Now if all of you folks have not read two books, and you haven't got enough money to buy them, sell your shirt or dress or whatever you don't need and buy them: John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* and his *Holy War*. These are a living emblem of what we're talking about in Nehemiah.

John Bunyan was a Baptist preacher. They told him he couldn't communicate the gospel. He communicated the gospel. They put him in jail in Bedford, England for thirteen years. But while he was in Bedford jail he wrote the *Pilgrim's Progress* and *The Holy War*.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon, the great London Baptist preacher, said, "The book which affected my life more than any other book outside the Bible was the *Pilgrim's Progress*." Spurgeon read it first at the age of five, when most of our kids are trying to master Mickey Mouse. He died at the age of fifty-seven and had read it one hundred times. Spurgeon's father was a Puritan preacher. His grandfather and great grandfather were Puritan preachers. Ten generations behind him were Puritan preachers. He came home to his mother at the age of sixteen and said, "Mother, God's called me to be a Baptist preacher." She said, "Charles, I always prayed you'd be a preacher, but I never prayed you'd be a Baptist." Spurgeon said, "God always gives more than you ask for."

We need a renewal of the realities of the conflict of the Christian life. I'm to be at three colleges this fall—Philadelphia College of the Bible, Baptist Bible College and Northeastern Bible College. At PCB I have selected to speak on fighting the good fight of faith—the Christian's warfare. I believe the kids need that for a solid week. We're going to be dealing with the Christian's warfare. That's a completely different series than this, but there's a great deal of that truth in Nehemiah.

Back in Nehemiah, nothing has happened yet—it was just announced that "they were exceedingly grieved that there had come a man to seek the welfare of the children of Israel." Now we move into the other positive sections of the book.

### **Nehemiah's Survey**

Nehemiah comes—after all, he had never seen Jerusalem, as far as we know. Now he's on the scene. It's one thing to get a pattern of the vision on the mount; it's another to see it as it is and enter into the nitty gritty of that vision. Nehemiah spends three days looking over his

broken walls, looking over his charred, burned gates and examining the condition of God's remnant in the land. When he got through, which he did quite secretly; after all you don't need to let everybody know what your spiritual plans are. The devil is not omniscient, nor is the devil omnipresent. There are some things that he does not know. Here we have one of the great characteristics of leadership.

By the way, I like that little expression over on the bookstore here. It identifies reading with leading, and that's true. Of course, the greatest reading on leadership is in the scriptures, and Nehemiah is one of the greatest books ever written on leadership. But when Nehemiah comes, he's alone. Oh, he may have a few that had prayed with him. There may be a few companions; but to tackle the job that he has to tackle he's got to have help.

### **Nehemiah's Program**

I'm speaking to some pastors here now. I realize there are a number of them here because I've had personal interviews with some of them already. A great many pastors (and I've been a pastor of four different churches) find out what the consensus of the congregation wants and then trip along and do it. That is not leadership! There are a great many pastors who simply spend all of their time in the problems that exist in the people. That is a ministry—no question about it. You must be problem-conscious and meet the problems. But there's something far greater than that; and that is, there must be the demonstration of power as well as the solving of problems.

Nehemiah comes to the people now, and this is the great crisis moment. He meets them and (verse 17), "Then I said unto them, Ye see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lieth waste, and the gates are burned with fire: come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach." He made sure that he knew what the need was.

You're not going to win someone to Christ unless there is a consciousness of what they're being saved from as well as what they're being saved unto. You don't call for the doctor unless you realize that you need the doctor.

"Ye see the distress...." Is there anybody who isn't convinced of the pitiful conditions? The condition of this remnant, these walls of this holy city and these charred gates. We're in trouble! Evidently he convinced them. Then he said, let me tell you a very remarkable thing. He told about being the king's cupbearer. He told all the story in detail that I have told you in these first two messages. Why? The Bible says "Then I told them of the hand of my God which was good upon me; and also the king's words that he had spoken unto me." He gave his testimony.

If there's one thing that's very important, it is that that pastor know that God led him to that pulpit, and he is there in the will of God, not simply because he had a unanimous vote of the congregation. There's nothing more inspiring than a man who stands in the pulpit and

declares, "This is God's place for me." But if he's always worrying about whether he should be somewhere else, he's never going to breathe that confidence into other people.

By the time Nehemiah got through as a leader, they know that he had been led to that spot. Now leadership is finding out what God wants you to do and then bringing other people to the place that God has revealed to you what must be done. This great group of people is not just a field to work in, they become a force to work with. Preacher, that's going to be the turning place of your congregation—a force to work with.

A young fellow introduced me one night down in Louisiana. As he introduced me, he said, "I attended this man's church when I was a student at Philadelphia College of Bible. I was out on assignment at times, but every time I didn't have an assignment I was at the Church of the Open Door." He said, "I can honestly say that I was never in a service where I did not see public decisions for Christ." Then he began to talk about the evangelistic gifts of this man.

Then I got up and told him something, and told the rest of the folks something. I said any man could win people to Christ in that church in that day. What do you mean? Do you realize I had thirty-five or forty men that walked the streets of Philadelphia for three hours every Sunday morning, every Sunday afternoon and worked hard. I never stood in my pulpit without knowing that there were many, many people who needed Christ, who had been prayed for, who had been loved, who had been befriended, who had been contacted and who had been brought and put there and were ready to be saved. Any kid could get up (who really knew the gospel) and win people to Christ in that church. Now some of the members of that church are here, so you can talk to them about it. They still follow me around for some reason.

I preached on tithing one Sunday morning, and nine sailors were converted. My board said, "You ought to preach on money every Sunday morning, Preacher." No, they were all ready. Why? I had a force of people who were working. I was just their leader. I didn't do all the work. People used to come to me and say this man wants to be led to Christ. I said go ahead and lead him to Christ. Why should I have all the blessing of leading someone to Christ? You do it.

Nehemiah got his force going. Why? "And they said, Let us rise up and build. So they strengthened their hands for this good work." They're ready to go. But wait a minute. You never get any progress without the next element of conflict.

The second element of conflict is in chapter two, verses nineteen and twenty. "But when Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, and Geshem the Arabian, heard it..." Heard what? Heard of this tremendous progress which was being made.

These liberal churches go on just fine, and you never hear of any rupture or any disagreement or any real battle in the church. Why should there be? If the devil's got them, he's not going to be interested in fooling around with them. He's got them already. I wouldn't give you two cents for a church that didn't have problems. It's one thing to have the problem; it's another

thing to solve it. It's got to be solved. The problem is going to be there. The devil's going to see to it.

I can remember in that same church [Church of the Open Door], with the front of the auditorium lined up with people and personal workers working, and all hell breaking loose in the back of the auditorium, of criticism of the very people that were members of that church. They go together. I'm used to living with opportunity and opposition and so was Nehemiah.

This book is so practical. Some of you when I began to study it, I'm sure, said, "Well that's kind of an old book—twenty-five hundred years old, and in the Old Testament. It must have mold on it. What in the world is he going to get out of that?" Boy, you look like it too. You've got crud on your nose and your chin on your chest and you're singing the hymn, "Hold the Fort for I am Coming." Your face may be so long that you could eat oatmeal out of a four inch gas pipe without much trouble.

This is a living book. This is just as living as the Gospel of John. It is equally the word of God. This wasn't written just for Nehemiah's generation; it was written for every generation. This is a forever generation. These principles will be eternal, when all time is past, and we're into eternity. These are eternal principles.

What did they do? (2:19) "...They laughed us to scorn, and despised us..." How many of you, when you do the right thing, just love to have people laugh at you? No, it's not easy to be laughed at; but sooner or later it's going to come, maybe right in your own family. The second one is "despised us." How many of you really want people to like you? I want people to like me. But sooner or later for your stand for Jesus Christ you're going to meet up with somebody that doesn't like you. Nehemiah did; they despised us, and that's not easy to take.

What did Nehemiah do? They pulled rank on him. You servicemen know what that expression means. They said, "We're going to tell the king what you're doing." We're going to tell the general and the captain. Oh, what if the Nehemiah was over in Jerusalem because the king, by his whim, had put him there? Nehemiah wasn't over there because the king gave him the disposition to come. What do you mean?—that's what you just said a few minutes ago. No, I didn't.

Look at the end of verse eight, "the king granted me, according to the good hand of my God upon me." There are first and second causes in theology. The first cause of every man's salvation is God—salvation is of the Lord. But it may be true that some Spirit-filled Christian worker led you to Christ. He's the instrument, or God's second cause. We commonly speak of second causes. But we never should forget the dominant priority of the first cause—it is of the Lord. No one here is saved apart from those words—it is of God.

The first cause of Nehemiah being in Jerusalem was God. This is a favorite expression of Nehemiah, "according to the good hand of my God upon me." The second cause—the Lord reached down and just took the heart of the king and turned it and said, "You do what I tell

you to do." It's wonderful to be in touch with God, who deals with kings and changes their minds and disposition.

Hudson Taylor, the great China missionary, used to say, "Learn to move men through God by prayer alone." So Nehemiah didn't answer their charge. "The God of heaven, he will prosper us..." But then he said something else. "You have no portion, nor right, nor memorial, in Jerusalem." He drew the line. The line of separation that is as distinct as black and white all the way through the scriptures. The line is between belief and unbelief.

In case you think I'm preaching Old Testament, 2 Corinthians 6:14 tells us, "be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers." There's a separation of light and darkness. These were men who did not believe what Nehemiah believed. Paul said it in Galatians 1:9, "If any man come preaching any other gospel than that ye have received, let him be accursed." He drew the line. The line is drawn here in Nehemiah. They had no right to the work in the sacred enclosure.

Back in Ezra, Zerubbabel and Joshua said, "Ye have nothing to do to build an house unto our God." That didn't mean they were not concerned for them. They would have gladly received them, had they received God's message, but they were God's enemies.

We're back to the positive again—building the wall (chapter 3). Some of you labored through chapter three and thought that you had to pronounce all those thirty-eight difficult names. That's a tough chapter, but in it are some great gems of truth.

### **1. Splendid Organization**

You can't read chapter three without being conscious of the fact that Nehemiah had his forces thoroughly and splendidly organized. There's nothing unspiritual about scriptural organization. Some folks think that, but it isn't true. Here they are organized to the job.

### **2. Individual Initiative**

All the same, organization does not demand the destruction of individual initiative. You'll read the chapter, and you'll find people doing more than they needed to do—"yet another piece..." (verses 11, 19, 20, 21, 24 and 27). We see individual initiative bringing out the characteristics of God-given initiative that He's given every one of us.

### **3. Honor Given**

"Honor to whom honor is due." This chapter commends the people who do a job and also rebukes the people who were lazy (verse 5).

### **4. False Ideal**



"And next unto them the Tekoites repaired; but their nobles put not their necks to the work of the Lord." The leadership of the Tekoites refused to do what they should do. But you'll find in another portion of the chapter (verse 27) that the Tekoites themselves didn't follow their nobles. They did their job anyway—the false ideal.

Many churches do as much, and follow as much, as the leadership of the church. Sometimes the leadership is very sorry; therefore, the followership is very sorry. You've got an absolute ideal and that ideal is, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:5). This is your ideal! You may gain from every other Christian the fine things that God does for them; but they're not your absolute ideal, only Christ is your absolute ideal.

## **5. Proper Subordination**

Most of them were Indians not chiefs, meaning common people serving under their leaders. In a lot of our churches, everybody wants to be a chief and nobody wants to follow or serve. There is great virtue, and the will of God, in followership as well as leadership. Of course, every followership has a measure of leadership. No question about it. No person who lives for the Lord, in any sense, can escape the responsibilities of some kind of leadership. You are either helping or hindering somebody.

But you understand what I'm talking about here—these who are distinguished in name as leaders. Harry Bolback, Jack Wyrzten, Don Robertson, Jimmy DeYoung, and all the rest of the leaders here, could never do what they're doing without the five to six hundred staff members that stand behind them to do the job. This chapter shows proper subordination. In fact, much of it is the ministry of the unnoticed, but it is a God-given ministry.

The third element of conflict comes out in chapter four. Just as soon as that wall got going "it came to pass, that when Sanballat heard that we were building the wall, he was angry, and felt great indignation, and mocked the Jews. He spoke before his brethren, the army of Samaria, and said, 'What are these feeble Jews doing? Will they fortify themselves? Will they sacrifice? Will they finish in a day? Will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish seeing they are burned?' Now Tobiah the Ammonite was by him, and he said, 'Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall break down their stone wall.'" Anger!

They couldn't stop the work, so they call the Jews feeble. Beware of that kind of a strategy—trying to destroy the man, if you can't answer a man's truth. Many people are doing it.

A little group of people, God-inspired and God-led, can accomplish things that the world will never understand. "The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness" (1 Corinthians 1:18). "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God for they are foolish" (1 Corinthians 2:14).

We could announce this morning that we were all going to be contributors, as many as would, to the Red Cross Blood Bank. That would hit the papers in the area. One hundred and eleven

people or so gave a pint of blood to the Red Cross Blood Bank—a tremendous thing. The world would understand that. But the worst drunken bum or the worst red-lettered, scarlet harlot that ever walked the streets of Schroon Lake could be saved in here this morning, and you couldn't get a line about that in the newspapers. Which is more important? Well, you know the answer. But the world doesn't understand that, so don't labor in trying to get them to understand it.

"What do these feeble Jews? What are they going to accomplish? Are they going to make an end in a day? What could they possibly make out of that rubbish?" This kind of smarted a little bit. I wish I had time now to deal with Nehemiah chapter four verses four and five. It takes a lot of study. Some of you may disagree with the sentiments in this prayer. But don't study it without thinking of words of Jesus in the twenty-third chapter of Matthew as He spoke against the Pharisees who destroyed the truth. Don't forget Paul in the first chapter of Galatians when he said, "If any man preach any other gospel, let him be accursed." There is no contradiction between what Nehemiah is talking about and what Jesus talked about and what Paul talked about. It may seem severe, and it is in theology what we call the *imprecatory* sections of the book. But here is a man who has so identified himself with the work of God that it cuts him to the quick when these seek to destroy it.

Look at verse six again. Here's a summary of the work. The Bible says, "So built we the wall; and all the wall was joined together to half of it: for the people had a mind to work."

The fourth element of conflict is in chapter four, verses seven and eight. "But it came to pass, that when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and the Arabians, and the Ammonites (they're increasing), and the Ashdodites, heard that the repairing of the walls of Jerusalem went forward, and that the breaches began to be closed, they were very angry, and conspired all of them together to come to fight against Jerusalem, and to hinder it."

Now comes a very serious thing. It's becoming more intense. Now there's the threat of physical harm. Study Jesus, and the increase of opposition to the climax in the cross. Study Paul with the increase of opposition practically in every town he preached in. Study this increase—three thousand souls under Peter's ministry, but under Stephen's three thousand rocks. There's the picture. It's here in Nehemiah. It's getting tougher. Why? The wall is getting higher!

Get ready for that opposition. Paul said, "I have fought a good fight. I have finished my course. I've kept the faith." It's what? Building and battling—the olive branch and the bundle of arrows—defensively fundamental and aggressively evangelistic—the trowel and the sword.

What did Nehemiah do now? Why, because he had something else that was really rather irritating. The people inside began to buckle. The very people that stood with him inside the wall began to show characteristics of weakness. This is always a problem facing leadership.

Leadership many times is very lonely. Jesus frequently walked alone. He had to, and there were times when all forsook him and fled. There are characteristics of leadership that show it's a very lonely road. Now Nehemiah is in that singular position. Why? There was manifestation of weariness. People began getting tired. They were exhausted. The burdens were heavy. The rubbish was high. It didn't seem like they were getting anywhere, and they began to be physically exhausted.

I talked to a dear brother after the lecture the other night about Ahithophel (2 Samuel 15-17). All of these human characteristics enter into this—physical exhaustion, emotional exhaustion and mental exhaustion. All of it has a bearing. Many times what we need in the battle is just to crawl up on the bed and get a good solid hour of sleep and come out fighting; or get on your knees and get fortified and come up fighting. So Nehemiah faced people who were exhausted, who were weary, as the word is here.

Then there was uncertainty (verse 11)—the attack was coming from almost anywhere. What's going to happen? We would like to know; if we could see where opposition was coming from, it would be one thing; but we can't. The Bible says the wicked put the arrow on the string that they may, in private, in darkness, shoot at the upright in heart. The Psalmist says, when the foundations begin to shake, what shall the righteous do? (Psalm 11:3). I don't know where the opposition is coming from. It comes from the most unexpected places. Uncertainty—if I knew, if I could just get at it; but I can't get at it, many times I can't.

Then there's incessant opposition—ever hear of the Morton salt motto, "when it rains it pours"? Sometimes the devil just takes them one right after another. He never lets up. Why? He's going to crush it. It's incessant.

Then again fear—there's something worse than fear, and that's false fear. The Bible says something about the wicked fleeing when no man pursueth. But you know, there are also a lot of Christians fleeing when nobody is pursuing. They just think they are.

What did this Nehemiah do? What if he had said, "Well, it's no use. This crowd is for the birds. There must be another church somewhere that would appreciate me more." Now we've got the leader too. Why? He's indulging in self-pity. Poor me! They don't appreciate me. I'll go someplace where they do. So you find preachers popping around two and three years in a spell and on until they preach their sermons and go to someplace else. When the opposition comes, they deserve it. Not Nehemiah, he stands there.

I have a son who used to be an all-American football player. He was nominated by the Football Sports Writers of America for all-American. I always liked to watch Steve. He was a linebacker. I'd see him walk behind whoever was on the line where there was an eight, seven or six-man line. He'd slap this one and slap that one and he'd stir them up. He was the barbed wire. He was the team leader. He inspired them to get at it—that's Nehemiah.

Nehemiah says, "You're looking at everything on a horizontal basis." These aren't his actual words. He said (verse 14), "remember the Lord, be not afraid of them:" Look vertically. Remember the Lord. He got their eyes where they should have been.

He changed the working conditions a little bit. Instead of all trowel and building, now he had some with the trowel in one hand and a sword in the other. Don't meet opposition unless you have to; but when it comes, get ready for it. Be prepared to meet it but never stop building.

Unfortunately in this country, there are some people who have forgotten to build, and they're doing nothing but battling. They're like Peter in the Garden of Gethsemane, cutting off ears—that's all. It's unfortunate. But there are other people who are so positively minded that they don't recognize the negative in the Scripture. They'll do all building and right behind them, the devil destroys it all because there's no proper polemic. The power of positive thinking has got to engage the power of negative thinking too.

Not only building but battling—that's the picture. So we summarize it in a three-fold way (verses 6 and 9): a heart to pray, an eye to watch, and a mind to work. This is a great combination, and a wonderful picture of the three-fold emphasis of the Christian life.

I can't over-emphasize the practicality of those three statements. In my ministry, which is quite widespread in this country and other countries, I'm finding an amazing lack of individual prayer lives. I'm finding an amazing lack of husbands and wives praying together. I go into preachers' homes where the preacher and his wife very rarely get together, just the two of them, for prayer. I couldn't possibly understand that.

The girl that I love is the girl that I pray with. We have tremendous times of prayer together. Then family prayer—we used to have it after dinner when all the kids were home. The kids used to say, "We have prayers for dessert."

Secondly, the eye to watch—where the devil has tripped you up. Have a reconnaissance of where your weaknesses are, and be ready. "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful...who will with the temptation also provide a way of escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (1 Corinthians 10:13). Learn the ways of escape. Learn where the devil operates, whether it's in your thought life, words, actions or whatever it may be.

Then all the time this is going on—never stop building for God. Don't let the devil ever let you lay down that trowel. Keep building in spite of all opposition. Get your fists full of tracts. Witness to someone. Get the work done. Build for God. Have a spiritual mind to work.

Chapter five is quite different. Up until this time, in these last three chapters, we have been dealing with the opposition on the outside—Sanballat, Tobiah, Geshem, the Ashdodites, the Samaritans, the Arabians, the Ammonites, the increasing enemies of God. We ended up yesterday with the great vertical cry—"Remember the Lord," and we found great victory for

Nehemiah. But now this is an inside job; we're not dealing with these outward enemies. We're not dealing with outside the wall. We're dealing with inside the wall.

Because it is a little clearer, I'm reading from the *New American Standard Bible*. "Now there was a great outcry of the people and of their wives against their Jewish brothers..." Remember that word brethren or brothers. "For there were those who said, 'We, our sons, and our daughters are many; therefore let us get grain that we may eat and live,' and there were others, 'We are mortgaging our fields, our vineyards and our houses that we might get grain because of the famine,' and there were those who said, 'We have borrowed money for the king's tax on our fields and our vineyards; and now, our flesh is like the flesh of our brothers, our children like their children, yet behold we are forcing our sons and our daughters to be slaves and some of our daughters are forced into bondage already, and we are helpless because our fields and vineyards belong to others.'"

This could be one of many situations inside of any group of believers. We're talking about the brethren. In this particular case, there were certain people who had and certain people who had not. There were certain people who had money they could use, loan, get interest and progressively bring into bondage their brethren. Their philosophy was "Get all you can, and can all you get." Now all of this was going on, evidently, without the knowledge of Nehemiah.

Sometimes a great spiritual leader will be so intent upon the great things of doing God's work that he may miss and fail to realize that something is cooking underneath that is very disastrous. But Paul, in the twentieth chapter of the book of Acts, tells us that the enemies of the soul not only come from the outside—the ravenous wolves coming in to destroy the flock—but men shall arise within that do the same thing. So it is that, right inside, something has happened which has caused a terrible condition. Now it comes to the knowledge of Nehemiah.

What is Nehemiah's reaction? "Then I was very angry when I heard their outcry and these words; then I consulted with myself" (a good thing to do when you get mad). Now we will call this righteous indignation. Nehemiah, who was a very wealthy man, couldn't conceive of people with money taking advantage of people who didn't have it. He couldn't imagine that believer against believer would happen in this common cause. They were not like the great Barnabas, who sold his fields and laid it at the apostles' feet, who in the early chapters of Acts was giving liberally to the things of God because people needed it. The Bible tells us in Acts that no man had need as a result of this.

May I put in a little plug for Bermuda? I've been in many of the homes of Bermuda. When somebody is in trouble next door, or there's sickness in the family, the people of Bermuda don't ask whether they can help. They just move in and help. They take care of their people. I wish I could see that more in America.

But isn't it too bad that it's believer against believer?—that's what's happening. What are we going to do? This is quite a problem. This has nothing to do with the enemy outside. Let's

sweep it under the rug, shall we? Let's say, it will go away. Let's just sleep on it a few days, it will go away. But sin is far worse than cancer. Sin is not benign; it is malignant. Sin, left unconfessed, means sin more in control. If you have unconfessed sin in your life today, it won't be the same tomorrow. It will be a little more intense.

Just as soon as Nehemiah saw the situation, he met it. This is another great trait of his leadership. First, he had a little private meeting with himself—a good idea. It's pretty dangerous to blow your top, even in the right cause. "I consulted with myself." I sat down and decided what I was going to do. And now I'm going to give you six words which I hope will be helpful to you.

1. I explained what was wrong! I made it very clear so that people understood that it was anti-scriptural and against the common interest of the body.
2. I exposed it for what it was!
3. I expelled it!
4. I revealed it! Get it out in the open where you can deal with it.
5. Rebuke it, if it's wrong.
6. Restore that which was destroyed.

This is one of the great revival chapters. At this point, if Nehemiah hadn't dealt with this problem inside, the rest of the Bible, in its study of Nehemiah would be, without any question, of no value. He had to meet this problem now. If it had not been met, the victory would not have been obtained in the next chapter. So he meets it. Evidently he had to meet it pretty much alone because he was contending with the nobles. He was contending with the rulers. He knew he was absolutely right. How did he know this?

Well, there's three lines of argument in this chapter. He said, "You are exacting usury or interest, each from his brother; therefore I held a great assembly against them. I said to them, We according to our ability have redeemed our Jewish brothers who are sold to the nations; now, would you even sell your brothers that they may be sold to us? Then they were silent and could not find a word to say." It's a tremendous argument.

If you're a believer this morning, you're a part of the same body—the body of Christ. Whatever you do affects me; and whatever I do affects you, just as every part of your body affects every other part of your body. You can't say, "What I do is my own business. It is not the business of anybody else in this realm of doing wrong." No! We're brethren, and we belong to the same body. We need to love one another.

"Likewise I said my brothers and my servants are lending them money and grain, please let off this usury." Verse nine: "The thing which ye are doing is not good; should you not walk in the fear of our God because of the reproach of the nations our enemies?" What does it do as far as a testimony is concerned?

Do you remember what Nathan told David after his great sin? He said, "You have given the heathen (the Gentiles) an occasion to blaspheme God." Every believer does that. How many of you have dealt with somebody, and that somebody comes back right away and says, "I know this person and that person in your church, and I know things about them that are rotten as hell?" What kind of an answer do you have for that? Not very much. I know that that is no excuse for them not coming to the Lord; but it's an awful tragedy when the enemies of the soul can point to the inconsistencies and sins within the camp and turn you off because of it. This is exactly what Nehemiah is saying here. You've destroyed the testimony of this body by doing what you're doing.

The third argument is rather self-evident. All the time they were doing this, there was no wall building. Everything came to a grinding stop, not because of Tobiah, Sanballat, nor the enemies, but because of the believers. No outward enemy of the soul can ever destroy the work of God. But a believer with unconfessed sin in his life can bring it to a halt—this is revival truth. It costs something to have revival. You have to pay the price of revival. Nehemiah could've, at this point, just turned his back on it and said somehow it will come out all right or go away. No! He's going to deal with it.

(5:11) "Please give back to them this very day their fields, their vineyards, their olive groves and their houses, also the hundredth part of the money and of the grain and the new wine and the oil that you are exacting from them. Then they said, We will give it back and will require nothing from them; we will do exactly as you say. So I called the priests and took an oath from them that they would do according to this promise. I also shook out the front of my garment and said, 'Thus may God shake out every man from his house and from the possessions who does not fulfill this promise and even thus must he be shaken out and emptied.'"

He got a very favorable response. What happened? "And all the assembly said, 'Amen.' Then they praised the Lord, and the people did according to this promise." He met the problem and solved it.

Before he goes on, here's a little bit of autobiography—one of the great studies of the book of Philippians is the three great sections of autobiography of Paul. You learn a great many intimate things about Paul from Philippians, where he turns and talks about himself instead of the Philippians.

Now Nehemiah is going to talk about himself a little bit. It's a very amusing verse, so we'll go through it very quickly. Verse 14: "Moreover from the day that I was appointed to be their governor in the land of Judah from the twentieth year to the thirty-second year of King Artaxerxes... twelve years, neither I nor my kinsmen have eaten the governor's food allowance." In other words, I had a right to claim funds for my maintenance, but I didn't take a dime. He would be, what you call nowadays, a brilliant man who serves for the so-called "one dollar a year."

Nehemiah goes on, "But the former governors who were before me laid burdens upon the people and took from them bread and wine besides forty shekels of silver; even their servants domineered the people. But I did not so because of the fear of the God." Nehemiah set a splendid example. If you're going to be a leader, you have to be an example.

Nehemiah could stand up to people who were less rich than he was and tell them of his actions, and those actions were above reproach. It would have been a sad thing if Nehemiah had been doing the same thing as the others, but he wasn't.

"And I also applied myself to the work on this wall. We did not buy any land, and all my servants were gathered there for the work." What is he saying? I got my hands dirty. I've been building this wall. I haven't told other people to do what I'm not willing to do. I don't tell my people to go out on visitation and I'm not willing to go out on visitation. I practice what I preach. Not only that, I haven't had self-interest in my mind. I haven't taken my money to get multiplied. I've commanded every servant in my household to get going in building this wall.

"Moreover there were at my table one hundred and fifty Jews and officials beside those who came to us from the nations that were around us." That's quite a crowd to feed every day. He tells us what he served them. "There was prepared each day one ox and six choice sheep, also birds were prepared for me, and once in ten days all sorts of wine were furnished in abundance; yet for all this I did not demand the governor's food allowance because the bondage was heavy upon this people." That's my argument for the fact that Nehemiah must have had a little cash somewhere. I think he had quite a resource and he was putting it at God's disposal. Not only his time, his talent (and he had brilliant talent) but his treasure! They go together—time, talent and treasure—all at God's disposal.

Then he says a little prayer "Remember, O my God, for good according to all that I have done for this people." What a piece of leadership!

In chapter six we will deal with one of the most important things in the book of Nehemiah. "Now it came about when it was reported to Sanballat, Tobiah, Geshem and to the rest of our enemies that I had rebuilt the wall and that no breach remained in it (although at that time I had not set up the doors and the gates), that Sanballat and Geshem sent a message to me saying to me, 'Come let us meet together in one of the villages in the plains of Ono.' But they were planning to harm me."

Are these the people who were exceedingly grieved? Are these the people who were laughing and ridiculing? Are these the people who were mad and angry? Are these the people who picked up swords and said, "We will fight you if you keep building that wall"? Now they're saying, sweetly and lovingly, "Why don't we sit down and talk this thing over?"

This is another insidious approach of the devil. Many a fine man of God has withstood all the enemies of the soul, and yet has become a victim of the ecumenical movement! Many a man has built a great work for God, and then suddenly when the unbeliever has said, "Let's sit



down; there are things in common even though there are things we disagree with. Let's talk this over. Surely we could come to some common ground. Surely fellowship is more important than truth." Don't you ever believe it!

These are the same enemies of the soul, but they're coming now as wolves in sheep's clothing. Paul said they would come—angels of light, even ministers in pulpits disguised as God's shepherds, but all the time ravenous wolves (2 Corinthians 11:13-15). Nehemiah says they sought to do evil. Now this Hebrew text is a little ambiguous. It may have meant to separate him from the workers—the old strategy: divide and conquer. If they could ever get Nehemiah away from this crowd, they probably could stop the work. Or it may have been even more severe, the words to harm and to do evil may even be read, "to murder." They thought they might get him away from the people and then get rid of him. "Let us meet in one of the villages in the plains of Ono." Nehemiah said, "Oh no!"

Some people have misunderstood the next verse, but I don't misunderstand it because of what Nehemiah says, "So I sent messengers to them saying I am doing a great work and I cannot come down. Why should the work stop while I leave it and come down to you?" Any man who doesn't believe what he's doing for God, if he's doing God's will, is the greatest work on earth, then something is wrong! It is the greatest job. You're in God's place—you are doing the thing that is the greatest.

He said, "Why should I lay down my trowel for an ecumenical conference? Why should I enter into dialogue with you and the work cease? I can't waste my time." By the same token, Abraham Kuyper said, "What should not be together (according to the Scriptures) should separate." But he also said something else, "What should be together ought to unite." By the same truth, that which should not be together is one thing; but people who love the Lord should have their hearts together. That is true ecumenicity! We stand together in the great essentials—the verbal and plenary inspiration of the Scriptures, the virgin birth, the vicarious atonement, the bodily resurrection of Christ, the veracity of miracles—the verities of the faith. We may disagree on the order of church government, whether it be independency, presbyterianism or episcopacy. Your worship service may be a little more formal than mine, or mine may be a little more formal than yours. I used to have people leave my church on Sunday morning because it was too formal, and leave on Sunday night because it was too informal!

But these are distinctives that separate us as local bodies; they should not separate us on the verities of the faith. I'm not talking about people who disagree on these other things. I'm talking about the great truths of the Scriptures. Belief belongs together, and unbelief belongs in another place. Nehemiah knew it!

Next is the sixth element of conflict—"they sent messengers to me four times in this manner and I answered them in the same way. Then Sanballat sent his servant to me in the same manner in the fifth time with an open letter in this hand." Notice the contents of this open letter.

"It is reported among the nations and Gashmu (which is Geshem) says, that you and the Jews are planning to rebel; therefore you are rebuilding the wall. You are to be their king according to these reports. You have also appointed prophets to proclaim in Jerusalem concerning you, 'A king is in Judah,' and now it will be reported to the king according to these reports; so come now, let us take counsel together." Talk about a false report!

Nothing in it but lies. What does it say? "We know you have an ulterior motive." It's amazing how people can read other peoples' minds. It's amazing how people can impugn motives. They're always looking for the insidious, ulterior motive. Now Nehemiah, you have posed yourself as a layman and a governor. You have acted under Artaxerxes in the rebuilding of this city. But all the time, you know very well what you're after. You want to be the big shot. You want to be the king! You have brainwashed prophets, and you're getting them all ready. And just as soon as that wall is completed, there's going to be a united shout and it will be, "There is a king in Judah—King Nehemiah." Then you're going to rebel against Artaxerxes. Dirty, rotten lies!

How many of you like to be lied about? I got a letter one day. I looked at it and could hardly believe it. I was a college president and a successful pastor of a great church. I blinked, and I took it to my lawyer. He looked at it, read it and said, "Do you want \$50,000?" I said, "John, what do you mean? You know, I always want \$50,000." "No, that letter is so libelous and so erroneous that, if you want to take it to court, you could easily pick up 50,000 dollars." I laughed at him and said, "I don't want 50,000 dollars that way." But, at the same time, that letter cut, but it was a lie. An absolute lie!

Now Nehemiah might have reacted this way—"Somebody has the wrong idea. I'd better go down and talk with them after all. I'd better sit down with this minister of this association... No, I mean the Samaritans. I'd better go and really declare myself as to what I really am. Everybody should know my motives." Nehemiah didn't waste his time. Why?

This is what he said, "Then I sent a message to him saying such things as you are saying have not been done, but you are inventing them in your own mind." Now that's putting it on the line. Not only are they lies, you made it up! Boy, that's the way to answer it. Yes sir, nothing but a pack of lies.

Well this enemy was withstood, but things are getting a little bit rough. So Nehemiah is doing a little more praying. "For all of them were trying to frighten us, thinking 'They will become discouraged with the work and it will not be done.'" Anything to get us in fear, anything to get us discouraged, anything to stop us from building the wall. "But now, O God, strengthen my hands." He was seeing some scars by this time; but Paul said, "I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus." He's standing now in the blood, sweat and tears of the conflict of building God's work. It's not an easy road.

Our hearts get a little bit sad as we look at this next portion. The seventh element of conflict: "When I entered the house of Shemaiah, the son of Delaiah, the son of Mehetabeel, who was

confined at home; 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, and they are coming to kill you at night.'" Let's get the scene.

Here's Shemaiah—he's one of the brethren. He's one of the insiders. "I've got some information for you, Nehemiah." What is it? "I've got some information. There's a group that are pledged to kill you and one of these nights—it may be tonight—they're coming in. There's one place you can be safe. I know that you as a layman have no right to enter into the sacred precincts of the temple. But it's kind of worth it to save your life, I would think. So why don't you flee to the inner precincts of the temple as a layman, even though it's not right and save your hide?"

Now if he had heard that from Tobiah, it probably wouldn't mean anything. But sometimes you hear it from some of the people you trust the most. Now we've come to the position of sympathizers within—people who are sympathetic with Tobiah, Sanballat and Geshem. The sin of sympathy with unbelief! Shemaiah is one of these.

What did Nehemiah do? Take off for the temple? No! I like what he said, "Should a man like me flee? What do I have to run from? And could one such as I, a layman, go into the temple even to save his life? I will not go in. Then I perceived that surely God had not sent him but he uttered his prophecy against me because Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him." Here's a guy who is a prophet—a false prophet.

We're living in a day when Shemaiahs are all around. "I've had a vision!" Does that vision square with the Word of God? If it doesn't, it's not from God. This book is not only eternal and verbally inspired, it is complete! God is not adding to His Word in the twentieth century, nor is he contradicting it.

He uttered his prophecy. The devil has prophets and healers. All healing is not divine. If God gave Satan permission to make Job sick, he presumably could give Satan permission to make him well. I said all healing is not divine. There is a healing that is demonic which is the doorway to deeper and deeper tragedy such as physical healing could never bring upon a person. Nehemiah has some people right alongside of him who are double agents. This is rough! But our Lord had the same thing. He had a Judas sitting at the table. He had a fifth column. He had a beachhead of the enemy right inside. This part of the book is kind of sad.

Now Nehemiah enlarges upon that a little bit. "He was hired for this reason: that I might become frightened and act accordingly in sin so that he might have an evil report in order that they could reproach me." If Nehemiah had run into that temple and nobody had been coming, all over the city the next day people would have been saying—"Some leader you've got. He ran and nobody was after him. Scared of his hide—do you know what he did? He went into the innermost part of the temple." They'd have an evil report. But they didn't have that evil report because Nehemiah didn't do it. You've got to watch your life.

Now he begins to pray again. "Remember, O my God, Tobiah and Sanballat according to these words of theirs and also Noadiah the prophetess..." What? Getting a woman in on this too? There's a prophetess—a woman prophet who is lined up on the wrong side, and the rest of the prophets who are trying to fight me.

Let's skip down to verses seventeen through nineteen, because this is a part of the same truth—"Also in those days many letters went from the nobles of Judah to Tobiah; Tobiah's letters came to them (some of these nobles were selling out); and many in Judah were bound by oath to him, because he was the son-in-law of Shechaniah the son of Arah and his son Johanan had married the daughter of Meshullam the son of Berechiah." There had been inter-marriage between belief and unbelief, which was absolutely prohibited.

"Moreover they were speaking about his good deeds in my presence and reporting my words to him. Then Tobiah sent letters to frighten me." It's one thing to fight the black outside the wall. It's another thing to fight the gray inside.

Look back now in verses fifteen and sixteen, "so the wall was completed, on the twenty-fifth day of the month Elul, in fifty-two days." The job is done.

Now look what the reaction was of the unbelieving world—"And it came about when all our enemies heard of it, and all the nations surrounding us saw it, they lost their confidence; for they recognized that this work had been accomplished with the help of our God." The job is done. The wall is done. The enclosure is done—that which he set out to do.

Then chapter seven is a great chapter of the census that names all the fifty thousand who were there with Nehemiah. It also tells about the brother of Nehemiah who was given a responsible position and other people who were given responsible positions.

Beginning at verse one of chapter eight we're going to deal with one of the great scenes of all the Bible—the scenes of revival.

Now as we close the lecture today, I am going to summarize it in Mr. Rendell's words again.

Chapter 5:1-13 deals with **strife**; don't ignore it, don't minimize it, beat it!

Chapter 5: Then as an individual, **set the example**. Set the example. You'll find that in verses 14-19.

Then as we have said: **Watch the snares**: the snare of unscriptural cooperation; the snare of an overreaction to the lies of the enemy; the snare of sympathizers within.

And, the last part of Chapter 6: **Finish the work**; get the job done.

And finally Chapter 7 is a great chapter concerning **delegating authority**.

And in getting ready for the greatest thing in the book of Nehemiah, I want you to pray that we may somehow in a very unusual way enter into the heart of what the Bible teaches about revival, because we are going to be explorers of a very true scene of a spiritual awakening. You may have many preconceived ideas about what a revival is, but you are going to have to square them, tomorrow, with what the Bible says a revival is. And I want you to be a little more in prayer in preparation of heart. Let's come to the service tomorrow prepared in heart for revival in our own hearts.

## Chapter Three

### VICTORY IN REVIVAL

#### Nehemiah 8-12

Now if you will turn to the eighth chapter of Nehemiah, in one sense the climax of this book comes in the lecture this morning. And I will take just a few moments in review:

1. The first great division of the book Nehemiah is: **Vision in Prayer**. We find the setting of the book, and the principal character of the book, the cupbearer to the king in Susa, a palace in Persia. He receives the report of the condition of God's people in the place of worship in Jerusalem. He is deeply concerned; and in the first chapter, he utters the great revival prayer of Nehemiah, calling upon God, confessing his sins, claiming the promises and making a full commitment to the Lord. As I said on the first day, the activities of chapter 1 really comprise a miniature of the whole. What happens to one man in chapter 1 now is going to take place in the hearts of thousands of people in the chapters that are before us this morning.

2. Then the second division of the book has a two-fold emphasis—positive and negative: (1) **Valiant for the Truth**, as taken from Jeremiah 9:3, and (2) **Valiant in Fight**, as taken from Hebrews 11:34. It is a picture of building and battling. All the way from chapter 2 through chapter 7, we traced the positive aspects of the completion of the wall, and we traced seven distinctive elements of conflict. Now tomorrow we will pick up that narrative as it closed in the last part of the sixth chapter. And tomorrow's lecture will be very important to the book.

4. The last (fourth) division will be: **Vigilance Forever**, Chapter 13.

3. Today we are dealing with **Victory in Revival**, beginning in Chapter 8:1.

Now, let me just say something as we begin this: The word "revival" can mean almost anything in anybody's language these days. If you travel down through the southern states, you probably would see many, many signs on churches with the great, big name "REVIVAL."

Now what does it mean? It means that they are having a series of evangelistic meetings or so-called revival meetings. There may be a spiritual awakening; that is, there may be a revival; and I am sure that most people trust that there will be. Many a series of meetings has passed without revival. Up north, we don't usually call them revivals. Although I was in Pennsylvania not long ago and sure enough, out in front of this church when I came for the meeting, it was "Revival," and that is what it was called.

We did not have a revival while we were there. Anything but! But, we did have a series of meetings. So I think we have to kind of clear the air a little bit. Revival may mean one of fifty different things in the minds of the people who are sitting here this morning. You might think

of revival as an emotional surge, or an emotional explosion where people jump. Down in the Bahamas we called them the "jumpers," and they may go clear over the seats. They may do all kinds of things which most people would look upon as excessive. And that would be termed a "revival."

So we are going to take basics today. The word revival, as translated, for instance in Psalm 85, "Wilt Thou not *revive* us again, that Thy people may rejoice in Thee," is made up of two Hebrew words: the Hebrew word *chayah*, which means "life"; and the Hebrew word *shuv*, which means "return." So, basically, the word which is translated from the Hebrew means to "return" and "to give life."

Now you can't revive something that does not have life. If you are here today and you do not have life, that is you do not know Christ as your Savior, you don't need a revival, you need a resurrection. You need to come out of the deadness of your sins into the new life which is in Christ. You need a spiritual resurrection: to die with Christ and to come alive in resurrection with Christ. But if you are a believer today, even though it may mean that the flame of your spiritual life is very, very low, or even gone out, and only the warm embers remain, something like a fire that is burned low, you need, in the language of Paul, "to stir up the fires." I like the New International Version on the fifth chapter of First Thessalonians. It says, "Fan the flame."

That is exactly what we are talking about. "Fan the flame." **Revival is a return to the vibrancy of dynamic spiritual living.** Now I hope we understand that we are not talking about a series of meetings or something which may be in your mind that you have heard about. We are going to put our ear, as it were, to the door of a true Bible revival. And we are going to listen to what we hear. Then, when you leave this auditorium, you are not going to be arguing with me as to a difference of opinion as to what a revival is. You are going to have to argue with the Scriptures, that's all. And I am going to stay just as close to this book as I possibly can. So, we are coming now to a true Bible revival and we have our Bibles open to chapter 8. And it is going to be a little bit disappointing to some of you, and that is all right.

Now let's get on to the truth. We'll begin reading in Chapter 8:1. "And all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the street that was before the Water Gate." This is one of the twelve great gates of Jerusalem, as recorded in this book. "As they spoke unto Ezra, the scribe, to bring the book of the Law of Moses which the Lord had commanded Israel." Notice two things: all through the first seven chapters we have a layman in action. His name is Nehemiah. He is a great spiritual leader; I am sure you are convinced of that now. But when it comes to the time of the great public meeting of the 50,000, Nehemiah steps aside and a man is introduced by the name of Ezra.

Now, perhaps you have never met Ezra. And I advise you to read the last four chapters of his book. He was not on the scene of the first six chapters of Ezra. But beginning in chapter seven of Ezra, you will find the record of his whole activity, some twelve or fifteen years prior to the scene that we have in the book of Nehemiah. And what I would like to say about Ezra is found here in the book of Ezra concerning himself. And he is well qualified to do what he is about to

do in the leading of this great spiritual awakening. Let me read it. "For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the Law [or the Word] of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel the statutes and ordinances." That says it all. Ezra 7:10. First let's examine heart preparation for the word of God. And then as the word of God revealed it, doing it—obedience. And then, communicating what God had given to him to as many people as possible.

I say, that says it all. This is the man who is going to be the human leader of the great spiritual awakening in the book of Nehemiah. And he has one message and it is found in three words: "Bring the Book." Everybody say it: "Bring the Book." You can't say it too much. "Bring the Book." Anything that calls itself a revival, that doesn't draw people back to an intense study of, the centrality and paramount nature of the Word of God, is not biblical awakening. You can shout, you can laugh, you can cry, you can scream, you can holler in tongues, you can do a thousand things. But if the thing, "Bring the Book," isn't there, it's spurious. It's false. Now I'm going to amplify that in just a little bit.

Now this is not quite as clamorous as you may have thought it was going to be. Bring the Book. How did they bring the Book? Here it is: "Ezra, the priest, brought the Book [or the Law, or the Word of God] before the congregation, both of men and women and all who could hear with understanding. Upon the first day of the seventh month he read from it facing the street that was before the Water Gate from the morning until mid-day. Before the men and the women and before those who could understand and the ears of all the people were attentive unto the Book of the Law." If you had walked into the scene you would have heard the Word of God. Now how is this done? You will notice in verse 4, that Ezra the scribe stood upon a pulpit of wood, which was made for the purpose; and beside him stood thirteen men who are named. Able, trained Bible scholars, Bible teachers who will assist Ezra in the exposition of the Word of God. Can you find them named? Ezra and the thirteen men. "Ezra opened the book (verse 5) in the sight of all the people (and he was above all the people), and when he opened it, all the people stood up. And Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God and all the people answered 'Amen,' lifting up their hands and they bowed their heads and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground."

Now we have thirteen more men, twenty-six, plus Ezra. That is quite a faculty. I only have nine in my faculty right now [at Biblical Theological Seminary]. They are fantastic scholars. But here are twenty-seven scholars of the Word of God to be the expositors of it. And the greatest verse on preaching in the Scripture is found in verse eight. "So they read in the book, in the Law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading." That's preaching. You can't get anything better than that. They made sure that they understood what the Word of God said. Then, because of their training, they expounded the meaning of the Word of God and they made sure that the people had an understanding of what they were hearing. At my institution, every man is required to be familiar with the Hebrew, the Aramaic portions of the Old Testament, and the Koine Greek of the New Testament. Why? He is to go out as an expositor of the Word of God. He has only got one excuse for standing in the pulpit: and that is to declare not what he says, but what God says.



I've run a Bible conference for years. I will be speaking at its 35th anniversary. I founded the Harvey Cedars Conference in 1941. Jack (Wyrzten) founded this one (Word of Life) five years later. I spent a full day in New York helping Jack before we got into this. And I left Harvey Cedars ten years later. It's still going strong. And I would not allow a man on my platform who did not believe in the verbal, plenary inspiration of Scriptures. But I am sorry to say that many men who came to my platform were not expounding the Word of God. They were not against the Word of God. But they did almost everything else but expound the Word of God sometimes. This emphasis has to be restored. And here we find it in a Bible revival. Now you can read on through this chapter and you can find that the Law (that is the word used, of course; then they did not have that full Bible that we have here); but the emphasis of the whole first point of the revival is what? Bring the Book. You will find it all the way through the verses I have just read. Verse 9, 13, 18; read it to yourself and you will come with an emphasis on the Word of God.

Now let's discuss this for a moment. Let's get down to the individual. If you are sitting here this morning and you haven't been exposed personally, [I am not talking about the prayer meeting at 8 a.m., I am not talking about the personal work class which followed and I am not talking about this one.] If you as an individual in the last 24 hours (put it that way) have not exposed yourself personally to the Word of God in a feeding session, then you are missing the boat. How many of you have had three meals in the last 24 hours? How many of you have had four? Say, what if I asked you if you hadn't eaten for two days? How would you feel, John, if you hadn't eaten for two days? He says sick to his stomach. How would you feel? Starved! Weak! All right, if you have not had a meal individually in the Word of God in the last two days, you are spiritually sick to your stomach, and you are starved; you are weak spiritually.

Now you may not like that. I have got news for you, you'd better like it pretty soon. What is more important, spiritual feeding or physical feeding? Come on! Spiritual. I have a friend; he has a motto, "No Bible, no breakfast." But he always eats Bible and breakfast. It always comes out that way, of course. Revival depends upon this. A personal perusal of the Word of God. A feeding session—not to prepare messages, not to prepare talks, but for your own soul's nurture. Not too long ago, one of those brilliant writers of our day was taken home; but he wrote a book, *How to Give Away Your Faith*. The last chapter is worth the whole book. It is called "Feeding at the Springs," by Paul Little. It is worth the whole book. It deals with this whole subject.

Okay, let's move to the second part of it. You are married. You have a family. Your most important task in that home is not to feed the family—that is important. Not to house that family. Your most important task, dad, is to communicate the Word of God to that family. There ought to be a time **every** day when you share the treasure of the Scriptures. I know preachers and their wives who never do this. I know preachers' families who never do this and the result is quite evident. There must be a time when the Word of God comes back if you are going to have a revived family. It won't be easy. You will have to battle against all sorts of things, as we have. But we always have prayers after supper; even when I was on the road, the kids simply had prayers for dessert. That is all right. I think my children would be the most

shocked people in the world... Like last week up in Canada, when all 20 of us got together—I don't have 20 children, don't look so worried; I am talking about the daughters-in-law and the sons-in-law and also the grandchildren. I think they would have been shocked at those gatherings when twenty of us sat down, and at the close of that meal the Word would not have been read. We appointed my youngest son [George], the missionary to Italy, to take care of family devotions every day. And we had marvelous times, tremendous meals, but also some tremendous spiritual feeding, too. And then, as we have in this text right here, what is it? The body of believers in the Word of God. That is what we have got in Nehemiah. We have the whole assembly standing in subservience to the Word of God. It is paramount that prominent attention be given to the Word of God. Bring the Book; that is the first great element of revival.

All right let's move to the second one this morning. Remember this is Bible teaching. Chapter 9. "Now in the twenty and fourth day of the month, the children of Israel were assembled with fasting and sackcloth upon them. And the seed of Israel separated themselves from all foreigners, and stood and confessed their sins and the iniquities of their fathers. They stood up in their place and read in the book of the Law of the Lord their God one-fourth part of the day and another fourth part they confessed and worshipped the Lord their God." And then you will find some of these men named again leading in this confession service, the Levities and the helpers; and they are commanded in verse 5: "Stand up and bless the Lord your God for ever and ever and blessed be thy glorious name which is exalted above all blessing and praise." And from that verse, all the way down through verse 15, they look into the past and see the wonder of God's providential leading in grace and all the marvelous miracles that He performed for them. And then comes the conjunctive "but," verse 16. "They and our fathers"—and here comes the confession of sin. Now let's imagine again, because it does not hurt you to have a bit of sanctified imagination. Suppose we walked through the Water Gate. What would we hear? The first great sound that we would hear would be the sound of the Word of God. But then we would hear the sobs; we would hear the confession. Some of you are just tightening up a little bit right now. I can feel it. "I am afraid of that word confession," you say. I am not going to be afraid of that word "confession," because it is a Bible word. A lot of people have abused public confession. But anything that is really good gets abused. Your standard is not: because somebody abuses it you forsake it. You look to the Word of God and see what it says. And we have public confession here. Don't misunderstand me. There is private confession before the Lord; and there is personal confession between one believer and another when things are wrong between them. But there is a place in the public assembly—according to the Word of God—for public confession. Now, what would you have heard in this confessing? There are five things: they begin in verse 16. You might be surprised what you hear; and you might be surprised what you don't hear. The first confession was the confession of pride. "I thought I was going to hear the confession of adultery or murder or some filthy devilish thing." No, we are dealing with basics. We are dealing with pride. Are you too proud to raise your hand for prayer? Are you too proud to let anybody see you weep? Are you too proud to be made into a fool for Christ's sake? A man was saved in one of my meetings not too long ago. Well, we had quite a number saved—in fact, we had 120 come to Christ in the

crusade. About the fourth night out, I decided in my informal way to do something a little different. I was preaching on why people don't come to Christ sooner.

So I looked out and said, "Anna, you came to Christ Sunday night, didn't you?"

"Yes."

"Why didn't you come before?"

"I was having too good of a time in the world," she said.

There were various other answers. But a fellow about four or five rows from the front had been saved the night before. I said, "Sir, I understand the people of this church have been praying for you for ten years. You came to Christ last night. Why didn't you come before that?" Just as quick as a flash, he said, "My dirty, rotten pride."

That is it!

You know, we in fundamental America are quite proud. We are proud of what we are. The old song comes in now: "Naught have I gotten but what I've received. Grace hath bestowed it since I have believed. Boasting excluded, might I abase, I am only a sinner, saved by grace."

The confession of pride, that's the first.

What is the second one? I wish I could deal with these adequately, but I've got to move through this book. Spiritual insensitivity. Now what do you mean? The words in the text are, "they had hardened their necks." So many of us are hard-boiled Christians. I was preaching one time and a young fellow began to sob, right down in the center section. The thing that startled me was that most of the believers around were annoyed. In fact, I expected an usher to come before too long and take him out. We need some more sobbing. We need some more tears. Not just for tears' sake. We need to be alive and spiritually sensitive. You know as I preach, I look at people. Some people, when you look out on them, you go into a deep freeze. That is right; they are that insensitive. There are other people, if you had a congregation full of them, you would never stop preaching.

Down in Greenville, SC, I can still see old "Dad McCall" there, his face literally shining. I couldn't look at Dad too much, or I would have been accused of preaching too long. He was drinking it in. And then he would hobble down the aisle, leaning on his cane, every movement in his body was in pain; and then I would have to be very patient because he would say, "Brother Jack,..." and then he would start through my whole outline. And then I would patiently listen and he was good—he had it all down. And then he would come to point 3 and his voice would choke up and he would say, "Brother Jack, when you got to talking about that, I'd like to have taken off."

Boy, it looked like he was going anytime, really! I remember the last time I saw him; I closed the crusade and I jumped into the car, and I was just about driving away and I heard a voice: "Brother Jack!" And I remembered that voice and got out very quickly. I hadn't said good-bye to Dad McCall. I walked over to where he was leaning on his cane, and he said, "Son, I may not be here the next time you come, but I will be waiting on you." You know what I was doing then! I had to duck and get into the car real quick. And he was not there the next time I came back. He's waiting on me; he has been waiting quite a while. But he's waiting. Thank God for the spiritually sensitive.

Jonah the prophet, the man that God used to prophecy truly about his nation, but the man who refused what God had for him, became so spiritually insensitive that he could sleep like a baby in the hold of the ship during a storm while unsaved men were despairing for their lives. Yes, Christians can become ten times more insensitive than unsaved people. I go into places where churches are as hard as rock. At the same time, on the streets the drunks take my hands and say, "Brother, pray for me." Spiritual insensitivity. And I am not crying for emotion. I am just crying for a truly biblical posture.

Number 3: Look at it again (9:16): "...harken not to thy commandments." What was the revival for? Verse 29, same chapter, "...and testify against them that thou mightiest bring them again unto thy Word." Any person here who is neglecting the Word of God is an unrevived Christian. You do not have to go down, and put your foot on the rail, and drink something at the bar. You don't have to go into some vicious scene of sin to be a backslider. You can backslide in a church pew just as fast as you can down in an upholstered sewer. If I had to preach to backsliders who were in the church or backsliders in the bar, if I had a choice of who I would preach to, I would preach to those in the bar. They know they are backsliders. You say, "You are getting to be an evangelist now." Yes, that is right. This is the picture. When the Word of God is neglected, that brings us into a place of spiritual insensitivity and pride.

Look at the fourth one (verse 17). They refuse to obey. They did know what to do and they did not do it. Now let me just give you a situation: If every person in this room who is a Christian right now, would do immediately what you know already you should do, we would have a revival in five seconds. Really! You don't need a whole lot of intricacies of new truth. You as believers must just act upon the truth that you already know. If you need to pray, if you need to get into the Word, if you need to put that thing from your life which you know very well is hindering you and you don't do it, then of course, you've put the X on revival. But the moment you say, "Now, I am going to obey God," revival will be here. I am well along in years now and have been preaching for about 45 years. I started when I was 18. So that dates me pretty well. I have been in some great scenes. I have been in some meetings like this where revival came out, and we closed the meeting 12 hours later. That's right. Nobody wanted to go. In fact, the crowd increased. I have been in meetings where revival broke out, where I dismissed the crowds and nobody left. Vancouver, BC, Canada, in a Baptist Church; I dismissed the crowd after giving the invitation. Not one soul walked out of that church. After a while I gave another invitation. Sixteen more people came. Then I dismissed them again. And they didn't leave

then. I dismissed them the third time and nobody left. It still wasn't dismissed. Nobody wanted to leave the scene. If I would have been at the Water Gate here, I would not have wanted to leave the scene here either.

I am going to Baptist Bible Seminary in Clarks Summit, PA, for a week. Baptist Bible used to be up at Johnson City, New York, at the First Baptist Church there. Back in the 1940's, I had a two-day series. I preached in the afternoon on "Nehemiah, The Man Who Prayed for Revival and Got It." I preached on Monday night on "David, the Man Who Confessed his Sin." I preached the next morning on another like theme; and when I closed the chapel service, a young lady stood up. She said, "May I say something?" I looked at the dean and said, "What about it?" and he said, "Okay." She said, "Last night you preached, and at 2:00 a.m. this morning I came to the end of myself in my room. I want to stand and testify to new joy and blessing and new liberty in my life." She sat down. A girl stood up—she was crying. She said, "When I came to Baptist Bible Seminary three months ago, one of my dearest friends was"—and she named the girl. "But we have become estranged. I have said some pretty rotten things about her and this student body knows it. And I want to get right with God. I want her"—she addressed her right then—"to forgive me, and I want anyone to whom I communicated these things to forgive me." A young fellow stood up right away. He said, "Before I came to Baptist Bible Seminary, I worked for a tinsmith. He had many packets of tools. I knew I had to work my way through school. I knew he would not miss one of the outfits. So I picked up that little case. All the tools belonged to him, but I brought it with me. I knew he would not miss it. I have got to get it right. I need to send that back by American Express this afternoon." Restitution was being made for one solid hour; that revival spirit prevailed. I got a tap on the shoulder. A faculty member stood up. He said, "I have got to get right with the Lord. I have been bluffing in my classes. I have been making a show that I have been spending hours in preparation when really I was just getting by with the least I could possibly do; and I was fooling the students and not even giving them what they should get and what they paid for." I closed it after an hour. I went to lunch. I knew that, if it was of God, it would go on and on. I spoke in the afternoon, and I did not want any accusation of mob psychology or anything like it. I didn't know what I was doing when I said this, but I said, "There is a little room right over here; and if there is anybody that needs to get right with Lord, I will be in that room. I will be very happy to see you." I did not realize what I was saying—5 hours later I walked into there. They lined up. I felt like a Catholic priest! Some of my greatest memories were sitting there and hearing, not vicious, violent devilish things, but just things that blocked revival. I went back to that school years later; one of the first faculty members to greet me said, "We shall never forget the last visit. May God give us another one."

No, it is not unscriptural or unbiblical to see movements of spiritual awakening like this. Here we find it in the Word of God. What is it? (9:17) "We were not mindful of His wonders." What does that mean? Are you satisfied to live on a mere natural plane more or less like you did before you were saved? No, I really have some Christians telling me this. "Really there is not too much difference in the way I live now than the way I lived before." They are not talking about vicious things; they are just talking about a manner and a way of life. If that is true, then there is something wrong. Do you mean to tell me that there is no difference between the

natural and the supernatural? You mean to tell me that you can live without the Spirit of God in you the same way that you live with the Spirit of God in you? I've got news for you. The wonder of what God is doing—and God has some wonders, some miracles, and some fantastic things. If you want to live content without them, can you live with that un-revived state? I'd shock some people by asking them to honestly tell me of a specific answer to prayer in the last 12 months. There are Christians that could not come up with one. God wants to work in His wonders and His supernatural. The devil is very content to let us live on a very natural way.

Somebody challenged me some years ago: "How are your plans for the next year?" Well, my schedule, as you can see, is all made out months and years ahead at many places and the budgets are all made out for the organization. Then the person said this: "Is there anything in your plan that could not possibly come to pass except for a supernatural act of God?" I began to think about that. There was not much! So I said, "Lord,"—sometimes I almost regretted that I prayed this prayer—"put something in my life that is beyond anything that I can figure out humanly." Then things began to happen! This is the way it ought to be, mindful of the wonders of God. Why should you be surprised at a supernatural God working miracles in your life? This is all of the fabric of revival. All right, there we are: I think we better move along to two more points, because the time is almost up already this morning.

The third thing that we are going to hear from the biblical revival: Chapter 10. Or, should I say, just the last few words of Chapter 9? "Because of all this we make a sure covenant, and write it; and our princes, Levites and priests set their seal to it." Now the NASB uses the word "agreement" if that word "covenant" bothers you. But you can make the word "decision" stick. Sometimes they chuckle at evangelists like myself for demanding a decision. I had somebody at a church not long ago say, "I like to come to listen to my pastor. I just don't like to come when an evangelist comes, because he is always seeking decisions." I make no apology. They are nailing it down in an agreement: a covenant and a decision; who is the first one to sign it? Yes, Nehemiah. He is the first one to respond to the invitation, if I may put it that way. He is the first one who wants the fullness of God's blessing of revival in his heart. He heads the list.

Now if you will read chapter 10—it is terrible to teach this book this way—but if you read chapter 10, you will find that the emphasis is particularly on three things. You will find an emphasis on decision as to their *time*. From this point on, their time belongs to God. If you read chapter 10 carefully, you will come away with the conviction that the *talent* of all is committed to the Lord; and then you will find in the third place that their *treasure*—not just their time—but their treasure belongs to God. It is a complete commitment.

Now, just look up a moment. Is there anything different in what we have heard than in what Nehemiah did in Chapter 1? No. Are you following me carefully? This man was a man of the word of God. How did you know that, Jack? Did you read carefully his prayer from verses 5-11? It is loaded with Scripture. Did you see how many Old Testament texts he quotes in his prayer? He obviously was a man who constantly said to his own soul, "Bring the book." And we read in chapter 1:6 that he confessed his sin and the sins of his fathers. His heart was wide

open in confession. He claimed the promises of God. Now it is just so very obvious that his time, his talents and his treasures were given to the Lord when he could not possibly see the miracles that He was bringing about, because he was hundreds of miles removed from the place of worship. But God broke it wide open, didn't he? Now all that happened to one man is happening to nearly 50,000 people. We are going to discuss them tomorrow. But this is a chapter of commitment. There is a southern saying that goes, "I don't care how high up in the air you go; we want to know the direction you walk when you come down."

A lady was here the other night, and she was telling me about her very wonderful pastor who is a friend of mine, who resigned and she was all broken up. So I thought I would tell her a little incident when I resigned from Church of the Open Door fifteen years ago. I saw one of my fine young business women drop her head and begin to cry. So I walked over to Barbara afterwards and took her by the arm and said that I wanted to talk to her. I asked her what was the matter. "You know what is the matter." "What is the matter?" "You are leaving and it was under your ministry that I came to know the Lord." "Who did you come to?" "The Lord." "Well, He's not leaving." That sweet girl has thanked me for that ever since. She said, "You kicked the props out from under me. You made me cast myself absolutely on the Lord." "Well," I said, "Barbara, I would hate to think that your spiritual life depends on me. The Savior walks out of here with you."

Back to thy side, O Lord, would I flee.  
My heart is hungry, Lord for Thee, just Thee,  
Wash me and cleanse me by Thy blood,  
I am coming back to Thee, Lord, to Thee.

They made a decision to walk out of this revival in a decision. I trust that everyone here will be doing that.

Then there is another note in this great revival. And I hope you have not missed it because you have been singing about it already in the camp. You did not realize, did you, that "The Joy of the Lord Is Your Strength," came from Nehemiah? It came from Scripture. Chapter 8, verse 10 is the fourth mark of revival. The joy of the Lord is your strength. You say, Jack, you have been talking pretty seriously. Yes, but the result of the Word and the result of the confession of sin and the result of a solemn covenant is always the fullness of joy. You will find it there not only in verse 10 but also in verse 12, "They began to make great mirth" and then you will find over there in chapter 8:17 "...and there was very great gladness..." In chapter 12:27 "...they kept the dedication with gladness..." In chapter 12:43 "...also that day they offered great sacrifices and rejoiced for God had made them rejoice with great joy. And the women and the children rejoiced so that the joy of Jerusalem was heard even afar off."

True Bible joy, not a silly grin! Not an emotional happiness, but the consequence of these other things. And the psalmist prays this out, "Oh, Lord wilt thou not revive us again, that thy people may rejoice in Thee?" The rejoicing Christian is the revived Christian.

I frequently have an experience when I have observed people for a few days—I don't do this to everybody. But I have approached them privately. I said, "I have been watching you. Something is wrong." I can remember a school teacher coming to me one time. She looked at me as though I had hit her with a knife, as much as to say, "How do you know?" "I have watched you. There is an absence of rejoicing. Something is really bothering you. If I can help you anytime let me know, okay?" and I walked away. The next day she came to talk to me. Then she opened up the sordid—and it was sordid—situation which took the joy out of her life. I said, "Oh, one thing for you to do is open your Bible to Psalm 51, that great psalm of confession, and then go on into your room and stay there this afternoon until you get that thing settled." That was the closing session, just like tomorrow, the Friday of the week. We came for the Friday night service and I looked out over the crowd and I saw light. Nobody had to tell me that she had made her decision. She hadn't made any public profession that night, but all I had to do was look and I knew that that victory was won. Now it isn't always that apparent but it is none the less true. Four great marks of spiritual awakening. Let's bow for prayer, now, shall we?



## Chapter Four

### VIGILANCE FOREVER

### Nehemiah 13

Let's turn to the book of Nehemiah again. What I am going to do today is just a little bit different. I am going to run you through the summary statements. Now remember these are not mine. These are the summary statements in a twenty-four article devotional series on the book of Nehemiah as written by T.S. Rendell, who is now the editor of a little magazine called *The Prairie Overcomer*. It comes out of Three Hills, Alberta, Canada, and has some very fine things in it. I think so much of it that I subscribe to the magazine for all of my staff as a gift. It is not a critical study. It is a devotional study. But I think you will find these twenty-three statements about the book of Nehemiah rather helpful. They don't follow along just with our outline, but after all I don't believe you could get these articles unless you happen to be a subscriber. They were printed in 1969-70, so that means that they are out of print. And I don't have them with me, so I am just giving you the summary statements—I happen to have those with me. All right, let's go through quickly now. This won't take but a few moments.

1. **Determine the Need.** The first four verses really emphasize the fact that Nehemiah learned that the people of God were in great affliction and reproach. The gates were burned with fire, the walls were broken down. It brought into place a great spiritual concern. And then in that first chapter we have the second point of this outline:

2. **He sought God's face.** In that revival prayer, he was calling upon God and confessing his sin, claiming the promises, and putting himself at God's disposal with a complete commitment. Chapter 1 is really a summary of the vision of the whole. Now we begin with chapter 2 and the third statement on this outline:

3. **Nehemiah got involved.** He was not doing it by proxy; he was not paying his dues and letting other people do the job. He said, like Isaiah, "Send me," and this is emphasized in the first ten verses of chapter 2.

4. Then he came to Jerusalem—you remember—and **he faced the facts.** He saw the wall, he saw the gates, and he saw the distress of the people as it really was, and he faced up to those facts. He was now on the scene that he wished to help.

5. Then as a trademark of leadership, **he enlisted others.** This is really the key to the book, because Nehemiah looked upon the people not as a field to work in, but as a force to work with. And they strengthened their hands for this good work.

6. As a result, the first note of enmity comes in 2:10. The second note of enmity comes in verses 19-20 in this book. And so we have to **withstand the enemy.**

7. Then chapter 3, according to Rendell, was taken as an emphasis of **distributing the load.**

8. And chapter 4 has the emphasis of **building the wall**.

9. **Deal with strife**. Remember this (chapter 5) was the case when there was an internal problem, where those who had funds took advantage of those who did not have funds; and Nehemiah, instead of sweeping it under the rug and saying it will go away, came to grips with the problem and dealt with the strife.

10. And then that last portion of chapter 5 emphasizes not the leadership of Nehemiah, but his example. **Nehemiah feared God**. Properly summarized in these words "...so did not I because of the fear of the Lord." He was a splendid example as a leader.

11. And then in chapter 6 Rendell has summarized this by saying, **watch the snares**. We know by our study what those snares were: Unscriptural cooperation, the reaction to a letter of lies, and also the reaction to sympathizers within. Those three things are contained in 6:1-14.

12. And then an emphasis on **finish the work** (6:15-16). This is all born out also in the book of Zechariah. Laying the foundation stone, and laying the headstone, the author and finisher. "What God has put in your hand to do, do it until the conclusion."

13. And then in chapter 7, the last chapter of the second division, **delegate authority**. That is, don't do the work of ten men, but put ten men to work.

14. Now we come to chapter 8. Yesterday we dealt with chapters 8-12, and these are the words of Mr. Rendell concerning that: **A working with others**. He lays emphasis on the fact that Ezra was working with Nehemiah and there was a tremendous companionship and communion between people who were doing the job, which is a good emphasis.

15. But then he cites what he did concerning the **great marks of revival**. (1) Honor God's Word. (2) And then in the section on confession, he lays emphasis on the fact that they went back in their history as to the goodness of God and how many times the nation had failed. So he too is speaking about confession of sin.

16. And then he entitles that great decision chapter (10), **Hold to the Highest**, to fulfill the statement, "Lord Jesus, anytime, anything, anywhere—I am ready, God helping me." Of course, he is holding to the highest. And I trust that it will not simply be a decision of last night, but a decision of life itself.

17. And then the emphasis that we made also concerning **joy**. "The joy of the Lord is your strength." The verse on the gladness of Jerusalem (8:10).

18. The joy of Jerusalem being heard round is emphasized: **Serve with Thanksgiving**, chapters 8-12.

Now I am going to give you five more points to complete his outline and these have to do with the thing I am going to talk about today:

19. **Maintain Separation.**
20. **Refuse to Compromise.**
21. **Teach Stewardship.**
22. **Expose Materialism.**
23. **Practice Discipline.**

Now we will get back to our own outline. And again, we are still doing a bit of review. Because some of you were not here, and because some of you did not write fast enough when you were here, we are going to just give you a chance to catch up this morning. They gave me just a little bit more time today, for which I am grateful; as this will enable us to wind this up.

All right, there are four main divisions in the book of Nehemiah:

1. Chapter 1: **Vision in Prayer.** 1:1-11
2. Chapter 2-7: Positively **Valiant in the Truth**, negatively **Valiant in Fight**.
3. Chapter 8-12: **Victory in Revival.** Yesterday we laid emphasis to great truths that should be the hallmarks of any true biblical awakening. And so there are four marks: the marks of a true spiritual awakening. Any so-called spiritual awakening that does not major in these four things or experiences is without scriptural foundation:

(1) Emphasis on the Word of God.

(2) Heart-searching and confession of sin. This corresponds with (1).

(3) The decision after that revival to walk in obedience to the Lord. If the result is not that, then something is wrong. If it is just a big explosion that takes you down to the bottom afterwards, then something is wrong with that so-called spiritual movement.

(4) The joy of the Lord is true expressing of Christian living.

Now that is where we left our Bibles yesterday, right? So, I want you to think with me right now concerning the sequence. Notice what I have in the notes—the sequence of events, and we will turn first to verse 13:6. In the period we are talking about now to begin with, Nehemiah says "...In all this time was not I at Jerusalem, for in the two and thirtieth year of Artaxerxes, King of Babylon, came I unto the King." Way back there in chapter 2 you will remember the King asked Nehemiah what he wanted and he also said "For how long shall they journey be and when will thou return? So it pleased the King to send me and I set him a time." Now, there is no question about the fact that he set him the time of 12 years. You say, "Now that is a little inconceivable, Jack, that he can think that far ahead." No, I don't think so at all. I

have friends who are working with the Papago Indians with the Wycliffe Bible Translators. They were married in our living room. And I said to Dean and Lucy, "How long is it going to take you to translate that New Testament in the language of the Papagos." Lucy looked up and said, "Sixteen years!" We had the pleasure of being in the presence of Lucy and Dean the other day and they had completed it in a little less—13 ½ years. Now they are starting on another one. So really, the setting of goals like this, I don't conceive of anyone doing anything else but setting of goals. And so it was twelve years.

So there came a time when Nehemiah, being an honest man and a committed man, said "I promised the King that I would be gone 12 years and now it is time for me to report to Susa, to the palace." I wonder if any of you had ever had to leave the midst of a great spiritual awakening. Maybe some of you have never been in the midst of a great spiritual awakening; therefore you wouldn't have had the experience. But, I have been in such gatherings and meetings that I didn't even want to go to bed! I didn't because I was afraid that I would wake up the next morning not in that same tremendous atmosphere of spiritual awakening. I can understand, I think a little bit, about how Nehemiah thought about this time. Who would want to go back to a stuffy old Eastern court of Susa (with a heathen tinge) out of the midst of the Word of God, joy, rejoicing and blessing? Of course he would not want to go, but he went. He took that long journey all the way from Jerusalem, all the way back to the palace in Susa. And one of the records of the Scripture says that one contingent took four months to do so. Just how long that journey was, and how long he stayed in Susa before the King once again relieved him—because that verse says—"...after certain days, obtained I leave of the King" meaning 'obtained I leave of the King once again' to come on back to Jerusalem. But we have a time span in there. That is why I put in the notes the sequence of events.

Now we know what Nehemiah did. He traveled all the way over to Susa, he spent some time there. He traveled from Susa all the way back to Jerusalem. Now we are going to find out what someone else did while Nehemiah did all this. And that is the second point of the outline.

What is it? The identification of Eliashib. And we will continue in the notes now. The identification of Eliashib. I have a lot of fun with unusual names of the Scripture. It's nice to go into the Scriptures and find out about this. Can anyone here, by the way, tell me the name of one of the ten spies? Remember there were twelve that went into the land. Remember? Who were the two? Oh—everybody knows them! Caleb and Joshua. Can somebody name one of the ten? No; the point is, we have forgotten. But you know back there at Kadesh Barnea, when they came back from the land; who were the popular men? The ten. And what were they going to do to Caleb and Joshua? They were so unpopular that they just about lost their lives. And the ten of the majority report were the great heroes; and they are absolutely forgotten in history. And the only two men who were right and faithful to God, their names have lived down in history: Caleb and Joshua. That ought to teach us something. That the majority is not always right, huh? I heard the great Billy Sunday say one time "We name our children John, Peter, Paul, and we name our dogs Buster."

There is a lesson in this as well. We must not forget certain names, however; and when I say Eliashib—who is he? Who is Eliashib? That is why we are teaching the book of Nehemiah. Now we've got to bring up the information about Eliashib. Look at Nehemiah 3:1. There he is! He is the first one named as the high priest. Well! Thank you Jack, you have identified him. Eliashib, the high priest. Second, he is a builder on the wall, 3:20-21. And we find these verses—I think that is the right citation—if it isn't he is in here somewhere. He is a builder of the wall. He is one of these faithful builders on the wall, so faithful that he is named with the other 37 great worthies of this chapter. And over in 12:10, 22-23, he is identified, of course, in his tribal identification. He is of the tribe of Levi.

And now I've got the bad news: 13:4—Now, this is just plain Bible that we are studying today. Before this, now we have got to identify; this time not. Because 13:1-3 come, of course, after what is said in verse 4, because it says "Before this...." Now what did Eliashib do before this? Just as soon as Nehemiah got out of town, the true colors of this man begin to come out. Now remember, I told you that the message of this day is going to be identified with the message immediately preceding revival. Now, let's go back just a minute. Remember, we were told of Shemaiah (the man who was hired by Sanballat and Geshem) to trick Nehemiah. We were told of Noadiah, the prophetess. We were told of certain rulers being sympathetic with Tobiah. But in that chapter Eliashib isn't named at all. Now the light comes up. All of the time this man is sympathetic toward Tobiah; but he doesn't dare make a move while the great and godly leadership of Nehemiah is in action. But just as soon as he is sure that Nehemiah is going back—and presumably he will be away for a number of months—he makes his move; and here it is: "Before this Eliashib the priest, having the oversight of the chamber of the house of our God, was allied unto Tobiah. He had prepared for him a great chamber where previously they had laid the meat offerings, the frankincense, the vessels and the tithes of the grain, the new wine and the oil which was commanded to be given to the Levities, the singers and the porters and the offerings of the priests." Now I know I read verse 6, but I am going to read it again because it is emphatic "...in all of this time was not I in Jerusalem." Now what did Eliashib do? He actually brought Tobiah into the temple; and he actually removed these sacred objects, the gifts of the people, in preference to an avowed unbeliever; and he honored him by putting him within the sacred enclosure. You say the most dangerous man in all this book is Tobiah! No! No, the most dangerous man is Eliashib. How come? Now I just want to correct some of your thinking. Some of you might have come in and said, "Well, yes that is true, he did identify with Tobiah, but he did do a lot for God with Nehemiah." And so you alleviate the charge of Tobiah in order to compliment him on the good he did do.

And that is just a little product of our relative thinking in this day. And if you have been in the public schools of America, you are already conditioned to relative thinking, because you have been under the awful emphasis of the Dewey/Kilpatrick system. You are conditioned in relative thinking. A great many things that you should have known have been taken out. What if I told you that tomorrow night—now I don't think I will—but what if I told you that I would preach tomorrow night on Robinson Crusoe? Now tell me, what would be your reaction? But I want to tell you something and if you don't believe it, I will prove it while on the grounds. I could take Daniel Defoe's unabridged edition of *Robinson Crusoe* and preach the gospel from

it tomorrow night from this pulpit. Why? Because, in the unabridged edition, Robinson Crusoe discovered three Bibles in the wreckage. Robinson Crusoe read himself into the kingdom of God! Robinson Crusoe became a believer, so much a believer that he thanked God for isolating him to that island so he could find Christ; and Robinson Crusoe had a burden for Friday, and led Friday to Christ as a native who needed the gospel.

You say, "Jack, that wasn't in the *Robinson Crusoe* that I read in school." That is what I am talking about. That has all been cut out of our American version; and the book that I got unabridged I had to go to Bermuda to get. That is where I bought it! You can buy unabridged editions outside of the United States. It is hard to get them, not impossible, but hard to get. Now let's get our thinking straight. By the way, I might preach, Eleanor, on Robinson Crusoe. But I tell you there is page after page of the finest theology—it would do us all good to read—if you could get them. I have a list of people who want them after a statement like this. They say the next time you go to Bermuda, buy one for me! But you can buy them in Bermuda, Bahamas, outside of the United States; but you really have a tough time finding them. It is a thrilling story; and Daniel DeFoe was the son of a minister and wrote *Robinson Crusoe* for this very purpose. [With the arrival of the Internet, this unabridged edition is available free from Project Gutenberg, in html, epub, Kindle and txt formats.]

So you see you have been deprived of something very wonderful. Well you have been deprived if you do this kind of thinking. The most dangerous man, according to Scripture, is not the man who is cold (Revelation 3). Some of you are thinking best = hot, next-best = lukewarm, worst = cold. God did not say that. God said, "I would you were [first choice] hot or [second choice] cold, but because you are lukewarm, I will [what?] spew you out of my mouth!"

All right, we have Eliashib right in the middle. Here is the man who can pick up a trowel and work with a man like Nehemiah, and then just as quickly move with Tobiah in the temple and work avidly with him. That is the most dangerous man of all! Eliashib—we are having a resurrection of Eliashibs in this day. I hope there is one thing you get coming out of this study: that you shun Eliashib and cling to Nehemiah. But this is what he did.

All right, we have identified Eliashib; now let's identify Tobiah. Do we need to? But you better get the verses. Yes, this is the man who is grieved that Nehemiah would come (2:10). This is the man who laughed and ridiculed Nehemiah and his followers (2:19-20). This is the man who made a joke out of the whole thing by saying a fox would break down the wall (4:3). This is the man who joined with Sanballat and Geshem and threatened bodily harm. This is the man who entered into the plot of an unscriptural cooperation. This is the man that concurred with Gashmu in that lying letter. This is the man who hired Shemaiah to trick Nehemiah. This is the same man. That's the man that Eliashib put into the temple.

All right, what happened? Now this is not in the text, except by inference. Some of you want to argue with me, okay; but the action of Eliashib can be reflected in the New Testament as I put in the notes. Look at 2 John 10 when you have a chance: "If any come preaching not this

doctrine bid him not speak." The teaching is very, very clear what you should do to one. And I am not talking about someone you seek to evangelize—I am talking about an apostate; I am talking about an avowed enemy of the truth. Paul said this in Galatians 1, as I put in the notes, "let him be accursed," or literally in the New International Version, "let him be eternally condemned." Ephesians says "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness but rebuke, reprove them." The Scripture is very clear on this.

So... what happened? All right. Maybe one week after Tobiah is settled in the temple—I am working my imagination now—people came to the temple; the choir was still there, porters were all in their place, a great crowd, but something, SOMETHING was missing! What was it? Well, the chorus said it: "The good hand of my God upon me..." Are you following me now? Now there is something under that hand that removes God's blessing. God can't bless that kind of an unscriptural arrangement. His hand of good blessing was removed. Possibly somebody in the next few weeks said, "I don't think I will go to worship today. Something is missing. I really didn't get much out of it last week..." So they stayed away. It was not long until Eliashib began to wring his hands a little bit. Why? The offerings were down. So he met with the choir of 240 voices and said, "I think we are going to have to curtail your activities." You see the choir in the day of Nehemiah was paid; and so were the porters, the maintenance men. It was not long until the staff was cut down again, and again, and again...until when Nehemiah came back (I'll get him back after a while, but I'll just anticipate this) he had to ask this question: (verse 11) "Then contended I with the rulers and said: 'Why is the house of God forsaken?'" That's what it says. It's gone! All that great revival is GONE by the time Nehemiah gets back.

Now in case you think this is an Old Testament truth that never bears repetition, I was in Keene, New Hampshire; Mrs. Murray and I were crusading, and the pastor said, "You know, the headquarters of D.L. Moody are not too far from here. Just over the line in Massachusetts. If you have a free afternoon, would you like to see it?" "Why, I certainly would!" So, we drove down to Northfield. I went over to the grave of D.L. Moody. And after I had finished visiting Northfield, I asked if Moody ever came back here to the schools that he started? Let me tell you something: just as Jack Wyrzten and Harry Bolback have headed up this work of a great conference; that is exactly what D.L. Moody was doing when he was an evangelist. He had some of the greatest student conferences in the world and he had some of the greatest teachers from all over the world in Northfield. And as a consequence, he started his schools, just as we are starting schools here.

But you can go back there today and there is no resemblance between what is going on there now and what D.L. Moody believed. And if D.L. stood there he would have to say, "Why is the house of God forsaken?" Modernism has taken over in Northfield. Tobiachs have moved in. The blessing of God is gone! Now, in miniature, you could say that thousands and thousands of times across this country. People used to come to me in Church of the Open Door in Philadelphia and we would have great Sunday night crowds. I remember one Sunday night some 1,200 people, 50 decisions for Christ; it was just a tremendous time. But they would just come to me—as I told you the other day—and say, "My, isn't this great, Jack?" They just

didn't get the reaction from me that they expected. I would say, "Yes, this is great, but 50 years ago there were 100 churches like this in Philadelphia on Sunday night." But if the old pastors like J. Wilbur Chapman, went down to 22nd and Bainbridge, what would he have to say? "Why is the house of God forsaken?" The churches are still there. Tremendous buildings. Some of them may have a light on Sunday night, some may not. Gone! The ravages of Tobiahism. Nehemiah is quite practical.

Well, I don't want to leave you there. Praise the Lord, Nehemiah does not stay in Susa. I imagine the king looked down—that is another question I'd be happy to ask Nehemiah—I know how you got over the first time: You had a sad face and the king saw it and asked you. How did you get over the second time? I imagine Artaxerxes looked at him and his actions and said he is certainly not at home here. He had gotten the great reports that there had been no rebellion, that that vicious devilish lie that we read about in chapter 6 was not true at all. If there was ever a faithful man to his king, it was Nehemiah. So one day, he said to his friend and I believe they were very close friends, "Nehemiah, why don't you go back and be governor for another term?" Hah! Do you think Nehemiah had to be told that twice? He said, "I am on my way!"

I can see Nehemiah approaching the city, coming through one of those gates, saying to himself, "Won't it just be wonderful, to be back here and hear that great singing? Won't it be great to hear the word of God from one of those great preachers under Ezra's leadership? I haven't heard a good sermon for months. Won't it be great to be in the midst of the fellowship and the blessing of God's people? Won't it be wonderful? I just have to quicken my step and get there!" He went through the gates—no sounds. Approaching the temple—no sounds. No people. As we say nowadays, "What happened?" Now Nehemiah could have said, "Well, isn't that too bad? Guess it's the day we are living in. Well, I am glad it wasn't my responsibility. Why, it all happened while I wasn't here!"

Now you want to see leadership in action? Want to see this book wind up and the closing part of this message? What in the world happened to that clock? Now really I don't mind if you put it to your ear. Oh, yes, I do. You can look at it but if you put it up to your ear to see if it is running, that makes me mad! All right, here he comes. Let's go to verse 7. "I came to Jerusalem and I discovered the evil that Eliashib had done for Tobiah in preparing for him a chamber in the courts of the house of God, and it grieved me very much; therefore [step 1] I cast forth all the household stuff of Tobiah out of the chamber." I'd liked to have been there walking along and seeing that bed and that table and that chair coming through! That's what it says! I am just preaching the Bible, that's all. He cleaned house, neighbor! He didn't ask for a board of deacons meeting, trustees, elders or anything. He said, "What does not belong here has got to go, and here it goes." He cast forth the stuff.

Does it ever occur to you, where was Tobiah, huh? Well, when old Nehemiah passed through that gate, one or another one of the guards said "Uh-oh! We better get word to Tobiah right now, he's on the way." As they say down in Texas, "I'm going to catch air!" and out he went.



He got out of there! He wasn't anywhere around! He was not going to stand up, nor was Eliashib anywhere around to stand up to this courageous leader of God.

Second thing, look at it: "So I commanded and they cleansed the chambers." I don't know what he used, Bon Ami or Dutch Cleanser or what it was, but he cleaned house! All this filthy stuff in here belonging to that unbeliever; now let's clean it up, let's clean it up! You will find that word 'cleansed' three places (9:22 and 30) on other issues, not just the quarters of Tobiah. You'll find the other things as mentioned in the Rendell notes. You'll find there are other things that needed to be cleansed. Why? I want to tell you, when the hand of God is removed almost anything can happen in the wrong direction. That is the way it goes. Just everything goes awry.

And Nehemiah had to do a lot of cleansing. And then the Bible says he did a lot of commanding. You will find it in verse 9. "I commanded, and they cleansed the chambers..." You will find those verses there in 9:19 and 22. And then right to the heart of it, verse 11, "...and then contended I with the rulers and said, 'why is the house of God forsaken?'" Well, this must have been some confrontation. Now, I have to inject a sad note here, but I try to be a preacher of reality, not idealism. Where were these rulers? Where were these people when Eliashib pulled his tricks? There are all kinds of folks who purport to be leaders; but they just believe in what is the most popular thing that is going on at the moment. They were just as quick to follow Eliashib as they were to follow Nehemiah.

That is the tragedy of our day. Whole churches are swept into apostasy because one pastor—I heard about one in New England the other day in a Bible-believing church, believing not only in ecclesiastical separation, but separation from the world, the flesh and the devil. You know, we evangelists have kind of a heritage. If you want to study what is wrong with a deck of cards, read Charlie Weigle, the fellow who wrote *No One Ever Cared for Me like Jesus*. If you want to find out about the modern dance, read William Biederwolf [American Presbyterian Evangelist, 1867-1939]. If you want to know what is wrong with liquor, read Billy Sunday. If you want to know hell over Hollywood, read Dan Gilbert. These men met the issues in the old days and demanded that people walk in separation. Yes, they did. They were leaders of people. But in this church in New England the pastor came along and said, "Well, I don't hold those views. There is nothing wrong with a social drink. There nothing wrong with Hollywood, you just have to be selective. There is nothing wrong with this..." And this dear lady said to me that the whole deacon board went along with it; rather than violate what this man wanted, they changed the constitution—God help us.

Now, I know I have stepped on some toes now. I should have brought some steel-pointed shoes, anyway. This conference stands not only for ecclesiastical separation, but for personal separation; and the moment it doesn't, I am not speaking from Nehemiah from this pulpit. I can't preach like this out of Nehemiah in too many conferences anymore. I think it was Wilson who said "Those who lead should, those who follow should, and the rest have to be driven." And that is the way people are. Jesus was heart-broken. He said, "They were as sheep not having [What?] a shepherd." You see the shepherd aspect of leadership can lead in the wrong

direction, as well as the right direction. The willy-nilly nature of people shift with Nehemiah, shift with Eliashib... this is the tragedy of the day; but thank God for Nehemiah. He commanded.

Now separation is not just removing what is wrong; let me read a couple of verses. Here it is (verse 7), "I gathered them together and set them in their place [see, the good hand of God was back; you see Tobiah was gone and the good hand of God was back], then [no financial problem] brought all Judah the tithe of the grain and the new wine and the oil unto the storehouse and I got so much that I made treasurers over the storehouses [and then he names the treasurers] and they were counted faithful and their office was to distribute unto their brethren." He brought back that which was right as well as removing that which was wrong. Separation is not just a series of negatives. It is from sin unto the word of God. And in removing what is wrong, God will give you 100 times better what is right, Amen? That is the picture.

Now Nehemiah had another task, too, after commanding. There is a little humorous note over there in verse 28: "And one of the sons of Joiada, the son of Eliashib, the high priest, was son-in-law to Sanballat, the Horonite; therefore I chased him from me." Oh! I would have like to have seen that! Can't you see it now? Somebody came up to me and asked "How old is Nehemiah at this point?" I don't know, but he is young enough to run. He was young enough to chase somebody out. He was young enough to be vigorous! I was a Bible conference director one time; and a speaker got up; he was kind of a little bit sweet-talk and everything. He says, "Now I believe in controversy, but I don't believe in calling names and pulling out hair." So after he finished, I got up (I was the conference director). And I said, "I don't very often disagree with my speakers, but I want you to turn to Nehemiah 13:25 with me for a moment." "And I contended with them, and cursed them, and smote certain of them, and plucked off their hair." I said, "Brother, you are unscriptural!"

I have had the privilege with being with some of the old worthies, and I remember a personal incident with William R. Newell. I wish all of you would have known him. Dr. Newell was D.L. Moody's understudy. He took his campaigns many times when Moody in his later years could not take them. William R. Newell, you know, wrote the words to the hymn, "At Calvary." He was preparing for a message and right at the end of the message, on a Sunday morning he wrote out the words and was walking down the halls of Moody Bible Institute and he saw a light in Dr. Towner's office and he opened it. Dr. Towner was there. Dr. Newell said "Dr. Towner, I have just written some words and I don't know if they are good enough for a song or not, but here you are." He walked out and went to preach somewhere. When he came back he noticed that Daniel Towner's light was still on and he walked back into the office and Towner looked up and said, "Well, I saw the words, I just didn't go to church; I wrote the song and here it is." It was "At Calvary."

Newell wrote a commentary on Romans, a commentary on Hebrews, and a commentary on Revelation. He was a tremendous fellow. Mrs. Murray and I have had the privilege of working with this saint of God. And one day he took us aside. He said, "You know, on one occasion I

was talking to D.L. Moody and G. Campbell Morgan, [Can you imagine that distinguished company? And I was all ears; I wanted to hear what he was saying.] He said, "We were discussing naming names in controversy; and I was a little bit surprised that Mr. Moody and Mr. Morgan took the position that you should not name names in controversy." And Newell with his square chin, and beautiful face, and shoulders squared up said, "Murray [that is what he called me], I told them they were both unscriptural and un-Pauline. In 2 Timothy there are four chapters, and Paul names two people who defected from the faith in each of the chapters." He said, "Gentlemen, you can have your views if you want to, but they are not according to the Scriptures." I remember that story.

But there it is. Now Nehemiah took forthright action. The revival is back, folks. It is back; if you read it very, very carefully, you will find that it is back. And let me touch on two notes and then I am through. Don't miss in this chapter the four notes on prayer. You say, "This vigorous casting, commanding, contending, cleansing, chastening individual was a man of prayer?" He had better be! You'd better not contend without prayer! You don't know a thing to do on your feet unless you know how to act on your knees. And in this chapter we have four great notes of prayer. Look at them for a moment. Verse 14: "Remember me, O my God, concerning this, and wipe not out my good deeds that I have done for the house of my God and for its offices." Again, verse 22: "Remember, O my God, concerning this also, and spare me according to the greatness of Thy mercy." Again, two right toward the close of the chapter. Verse 29: "Remember them, oh my God, because they have defiled the priesthood and the covenant of the priesthood, and of the Levities," Then the book closes with that great word, "Remember me, oh my God, for good."

Now let's make a personal word and be all through. We talked about a far-off theme. Twenty-five hundred years ago, and you say, "What does it have to do with me?" Well, a Tobiah, spiritually speaking, figuratively speaking, can destroy a revived heart just like a Tobiah destroyed a revived people. Tobiahs can be a hundred things. There may be some rotten thought-life. There may be some habit. Oh, there may be so many things that become Tobiahs. Things that are allowed in your heart that should not be there. And they will remove the blessing of the Lord. Oh, God will bless in some way in spite of it, but not his full blessing. If you want the full blessing, then you are going to have to do what Nehemiah did. You are going to have to confess that Tobiah. You are going to have to make a clean break of it, as David did in Psalm 32. Get it out of there, and get back into the Word and prevailing prayer. Do whatever those good, positive things are that you need to do; and the good hand of God will be back. There are two hands (Psalm 32). David said that when he refused to remove the unconfessed sin from his heart, the heavy hand of God was on him. There is the heavy hand of God and there is the good hand of God.

As we close this Nehemiah series, let's ask God always to help us to abide under the good hand of God. That is, walk so that what we are doing may have his blessing. Oh, that may not save you from the difficult place. You may go through very, very deep valleys. I heard a speaker right from this platform one year say, "After I came to Christ, all my trouble was over." I've got news for you; all my trouble was not over. But thank God, I have an answer to

all my trouble. He has not promised to remove that difficult way. He didn't promise those disciples that they would cross the sea on calm water. He has not promised you that you would cross life without its storms. But I have news for you, He has promised you a safe harbor and He has promised you everything you need to go through the storm according to His good hand upon us.

Now God bless you. I will be preaching on Saturday night, God willing. Shall we stand for prayer?

"Dear Lord, we have been walking through the pages of Your Word, and they have been so practical to us, so helpful. And Lord, we do ask that they may not just be a hearing ministry, but a doing ministry. May we do it; may we act, and may whole churches be revived as a result of what you have done in our hearts. Grant great victory, power and blessing and use us as a result of the instruction by Thy Holy Spirit this week. In Jesus' name, Amen."