

Jack Murray, Nehemiah, Lecture 1

Transcribed by Courtney Stevenson, 2008 Gordon College

Bible Evangelism presents, once again, expository preaching by Dr. Jack Murray. Designed to exalt the savior and bless you, the listener. Lecture 1
Here now is Dr. Jack Murray:

Introduction

We are going to be dealing in these 5 mornings with a rather unusual book as far as Bible studies concern. Now 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.

Vision in Prayer

Number one, "Vision in Prayer". Everybody say it, "Vision in Prayer". Now this has to do with chapter one only. Chapter one is a miniature of the whole. What happens to one man in chapter one really, happens to thousands of people in the rest of the book, but a proper understanding of chapter one, which we trust we will have this morning, will give us a miniature of the whole, and will help you to understand the entire book of Nehemiah.

Valiant for the Truth and Valiant in Fight

Then the second division is two fold. It's called, "Valiant for the Truth", these words are found in Jeremiah 9:3 and "Valiant in Fight", these words are found in Hebrews 11: 34. 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, very necessary. The chapters, chapters 2- 7 of Nehemiah, a two-fold outline.

I could best perhaps illustrate this if you've got a dollar bill. I'm not going to take an offering, don't look so worried. If you've got a dollar bill in your purse or your wallet, why don't you dig it out and look at it for a moment. And 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, 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 you know, people get the idea that when they come to Christ they are carefully wrap packaged, stamped "this side up, fragile," bound for heaven. I've got news for you, that news is that 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. And 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, not by the olive branch, or the bundle of arrows, but by the trowel and sword. The trowel representing what? Building. The sword representing battling. There they have them: building and battling. Now I'm a realist, I'm not an idealist. We must face things as we find them and in the Christian life there is building and in the Christian life there is battling, and by the time you get through the book of Nehemiah you are going to discover it, if you haven't discovered it before.

Let me give you an illustration from the New Testament. You know when Paul went into the Roman colony city of Philippi, there was no synagogue, his custom usually was to go to the synagogue and there from the Old Testament scriptures, open an allege 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 riverside, the Bible says that Paul spoke and there was a woman there by the name of Lydia. The Bible says "whose heart the Lord opened and she attended unto the things which were spoken

by Paul" (Acts 16:14). We have the first convert in Europe, we have the conversion not only of Lydia, but of her whole household. In fact the household Lydia became the place of the infant church in Philippi, the meeting place. And everybody says. "O isn't it marvelous to be able to do Christian work just like that, just by going out into the orchard and touching that right plumb and letting it drop right into your hands". Everybody likes to do Christian work like that and if you stop in the 16th chapter of Acts, with that story, you only have part of it. It wasn't very long after 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 servant of the most high God to show unto you the way of salvation" (Acts 16:17). This demonic testimony was annoying to Paul, and so he pointed the finger at the girl and spoke to the demon, "I command you in the name of Jesus to come out of her," and the strange futuristic powers of this girl were forever thwarted and the men who were gaining great wealth from her fantastic predictions caught Paul and Silas, drew them into the marketplace, accused them of a three-fold false accusation, and then beat them and put them in the inner prison. But it was in the inner prison where Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises to God, and it was in the inner prison that the jailer cried, "what must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:30). 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 a scene of positive action, building, beautiful, complacent, 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 prison, ask the Christians behind the iron curtain, ask the Christians behind the bamboo curtain, ask the Christians behind the sugar cane curtain, and they are in the aspect of battle. Now this is what we find in the book of Nehemiah. This is great truth, the principals of Nehemiah are of course amplified in the New Testament, but we find their basics in Nehemiah.

Victory in Revival

Alright now let's move to the third division of the outline. That division is chapters 8-12, and we call it, "Victory in Revival". Everybody say it, "Victory in Revival". Alright, "Victory in revival" chapters 8-12. Now just a little insight in to this, 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 50,000 people in chapters 8, 9, 10, and 11 and 12. And we'll come to that on Thursday, "Victory in Revival."

Now it would seem that in as much as revival has been won, we ought to say, and 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 13 is a single division also, the fourth division of the book, and we call this, "Vigilance Forever". The great revival which was won in chapters 8-12, is lost in chapter 13 and regained again. And the book ends on a note of vigilance.

Alright, I've been deliberate in this, now this morning and I want you to get this outline. My method is usually to give you the whole outline and then start building in the particulars. We've put a few particulars in chapter one that we're going to deal with. Now I want you to be perfectly at ease, informal, in fact we have plenty of time and if I can possibly do it, I'm going to allow a few minutes at the close of each hour to ask you for your questions. Now you may have a question, I remember sitting in college classes and I'd think up something and then I'd say, "Oh no, I better not ask that". That'll reveal my stupid thinking, about 5 minutes later some joker would ask the same question and the Prof. would say, "That is an excellent question!" and I'd loose all the glory. So what is a question in your mind maybe a question in many minds. I have five children; we have 5 children, three sons and two daughters. When I was a pastor I used to do something, I wanted my kinds to listen to me, its not always hard to listen to pop you know, but the way did it was this, now you follow me now will you and make your outline. And if the outline is right, I'll give you a quarter, not so right, 20

cents, couple of marks off, 15, nothing below 10. And so we had seven miles to drive to the parsonage after the Sunday morning service. And I'd say, ok Steve, Steve today is the manager of the Aluminum Company of America in Garden City, Long Island, I'd say to Steve, "Steve point number one", he'd come firing through with point number one. "Excellent son!" "And what about point number two Sarah?", "Well dad I didn't get it very well." Frank would say, "I didn't either". George might say, "I didn't get it at all". Now I didn't say, "Why didn't you listen!? I'd say Jack you missed it, you missed it, they've out voted you. You evidently were not very clear. I learned a great deal from my children. And I learned to labor, in fact the most prolific comment that we get in the crusades is, "your teaching is so very simple." That's the way I want it to be. I can make no apology for it. I want it to be understood. When somebody walks up to you, as they did about one hour ago, and reveals to you your full outline of a series of meetings that you gave fourteen years ago, its kind of a humbling experience. There it is. They have never forgotten it, now I want that. I want not just some inspiration while we're here in the mornings, I want some instruction that will stay with you for a long time. Any Scotchmen here? I want some porridge that will stick to your bones. Some oatmeal here, something that's substantial. Not some current, not some foam on top of the water, but some deep current underneath, I want you to get the truths of this great book.

Setting of Nehemiah: Post-exilic period

Alright, now we are going into the study, not let's take our Bibles now and let's begin with this book of Nehemiah. And you're going to find it very fascinating, "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" (Neh. 1:1).

Alright now look up everybody, 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 70 years captivity. God sent his people into captivity because of

their apostasy. He punished them with 70 years of judgment, and then immediately following these 70 years, we have activity. Now this activity has begun a whole century before we come to Nehemiah.

This is what we call the post- captivity books: Ezra, Esther, Nehemiah. And of course the founding prophet Haggi, Zachariah, and Malachi. Let me give you a quick run through, not to bore you, we'll do this again, but in the book of Ezra we find the decree of Cyrus. Where God works in the heart of this great king. And he decrees that the temple should be rebuilt. Two outstanding leaders are found in these first six chapters of Ezra. This takes place almost a century before Nehemiah. Zerubbabel, the governmental leader, Jeshua, or Joshua, the priestly leader. These two came, you remember, and some 50,000 people came. And 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. And some of the older people who had remembered the great beauty of Solomon's temple, wept (Ezra 3:12), but it was a true temple. And then you remember the Samaritans came and resisted the building of the temple so the building stopped, and the foundation was there, but that was all.

And then two mighty preachers of the gospel came along. One by the name of Zachariah, he was the prophet of encouragement. Another was Haggai, he was the prophet of rebuke. And these two men teamed up and came into the company of the exiles, and stirred them up. And they began to build again in spite of opposition. And by the end of the sixth chapter of Ezra, we have the completion of the post captivity temple. Now this again is some 70 years before the events of Nehemiah, and then between chapters 6 and chapters 7 of Ezra, there is a span of some 50 or 60 years of unrecorded events, and then beginning at chapters 7, 8, 9, and 10 of Ezra, we have the actual ministry of Ezra, as he comes back with a smaller contingent, and 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, a 12 year period from the end of Ezra until what we meet here in the beginning of the book of Nehemiah. Now I hope that has not been too rapid and I hope that you've got it just a little bit.

But Nehemiah is coming on the scene now, some one hundred years after the activities of the post captivity period. And the Bible says here in chapter 1, he was in Shushan the palace, he was still in the capital of Persia. And just to just ahead a little bit, what was he doing in the capital of Persia? The last word of chapter one, "For I was the King's cupbearer".

Nehemiah the cupbearer

Now let's get this very plain 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 the King. He was the man who stood, many times, between death and the king. By poisoning, by plots, by many, many, things 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, no! Nehemiah was a very prominent, outstanding, accomplished, affluent, layman. 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. That's right, and he's a very wealthy layman, and I'll prove it before the end of the week. He had everything he wanted: position, wealth, comfort. Don't get the picture of him 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. And he tells the story of what happened to him. This is not the record of a Daniel, who in his youth purposed in his heart not to defile himself with the king's meat. Here is a man who is matured. He's like a great many of you. And 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 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. I hope I can convince you of that before the end of the week.

Alright, so now we've got the setting, haven't we. Now what happened in this setting, the Bible says "That Hanani, one of my brethren," verse two, "he and certain men of Judah came from Jerusalem and I asked them concerning the Jews who had escaped, what was left of the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem" (Neh.1:2). Now, evidently the flesh brother of Nehemiah, with some other man, had been to Jerusalem and that was a long journey in those days. One record of that journey covered four months. Now they have returned to the capital of Persia and here were people who were, or should have been concerned, about the spiritual welfare of God's people in the Old Testament most of them were not. Most of them were quite settled and comfortable in Persia. And 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, verse 3, "And the people or the remnant who 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 are burned with fire" (Neh. 1:3). Now I could make an hour out of almost every verse. 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 function of people before facility. It wasn't an emphasis on building, it was an emphasis upon spiritual work among people.

“Rebuilding Jerusalem’s Walls in Preparation for Spiritual Awakening”

Now at the top of my New Scofield Reference Bible, you always have a theme and I disagree with the theme of this New Scofield Reference Bible. Not because I disagree with what it says, but what it doesn't say. The theme says, "Rebuilding Jerusalem's Wall". You say, "Well what in the world is wrong with that?" Nothing! Except that's its incomplete. It took only 52 days to complete the

wall. The term of office of Nehemiah, in the period we shall study took 12 year years. There is quite a comparison between two months and 12 years. And if you read in your Sunday school quarterly you'll find Nehemiah depicted as a glorified contractor, he's a brick builder or a wall builder. Now he was that, but he was only incidentally that in order to bring about something far greater. So I have added to it, maybe I'll write to the committee and suggest it. My theme is not only, "Rebuilding Jerusalem's Walls", but, "Rebuilding Jerusalem's Walls in Preparation for Spiritual Awakening".

This beautiful auditorium is just wood, and mortar, and glass, and metal. Every believer in Christ in this room, should the rapture take place while I'm preaching this morning would be gone. Amen? Amen. This auditorium would still be here. This is simply something to keep us out of the sun in the summer, and comfortable, and out of the snow and the rain in the winter while we can do a spiritual function. And by the way, that's all your church building is too. There is nothing more sacred about that wood there than any other piece of wood that's ever been taken out of the woods. This is not the sacred desk. The only thing that makes it that way, is that it upholds the sacred word of God, and you can do that on a chair if you want to. I'm kinda getting fed up with the emphasis on facility and not function. Folks telling me about there beautiful, beautiful, beautiful churches. I'm not against beautiful churches, but the only reason you've got a beautiful building it so do something with it. Wear it out winning people to Christ. That's what you've got it for. Thank God it's beautiful architect, thank God for this beautiful place, but it means absolutely nothing unless we are doing what we are doing right now: teaching the word of God. So don't get a wrong emphasis here. Don't get just wall building in your mind. There is something greater in the book of Nehemiah than wall building, ok? That is the remnant, the people, then the wall, then the gates.

Nehemiah's Reaction

Alright now, "Nehemiah's reaction." He could have kind of shrugged his shoulders a little bit, and said well, "Rough. Here I am a captive of a captive people. Here I am hundreds of miles removed from the place that I am 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. Look in verse four now, Nehemiah's godly concern, "And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and what? wept, and mourned, and fasted, and prayed" (Neh. 1:4). Quite a lot in that verse isn't there? American fundamentalism almost has lost the quotient of fasting. But don't you ever believe the body of Christ throughout the world has lost the quotient 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 is nothing wrong with eating. There's nothing wrong with sleeping, but there's something greater in the line of spiritual truths, and that is to take on something far more important: spiritual pursuit of God's objectives, this is Nehemiah. It broke his heart.

Somebody said, I think it was the great McLaren, the great 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 service men were brought into those auditoriums; hundreds of them were won to Christ. People use to come to me and say, "Isn't this great Jack", and they didn't get the reaction from me they expected. I'd say, "Yes it is. It's wonderful, but isn't it sad that 50 years ago there were a hundred churches in Philadelphia, doing this, but tonight after you leave the service you can drive down Broad Street or out on Market Street or along Chestnut Street or Walnut street, and see great, great facilities but by the prayers and sacrifice and the gifts of God's people, who scarcely have a light in them on Sunday nights. Right? O yes. 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?

Nehemiah's Prayer

Nehemiah's prayer. Now let me just say a word about this man Nehemiah. You know I want to have a tremendous time when I get to heaven and 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. When I said something about this man even now. Now let me just read a few words, 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 that was shown him on 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 the 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 in to action in the tabernacle, was what he had been given in the mount. He came from mountains of vision down to the planes of the valley and put it in action."

Now we're dealing with Nehemiah this morning and the mountains of vision. You know now a days if a kids goes out in to the filed and lays on his back and pulls a grass straw and sticks it through his teeth and does it for 15minutes while he watches the clouds go by, his parents call for a psychiatrist. People are

afraid to be alone. They want to act like 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 where your red or yellow or black or white. I don't care whether 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's going to find out what it is. And God help you to find out and do it.

I've got five children they're all different, nothing partial about us. All five of them went to college, but each one of them went to a different college. That's the way it is. I think each of them went to that college at 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 of him, but you are just as important to God as Nehemiah. Did you hear me? 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. Now I'm going to suggest some principles from this book how you, like Nehemiah, can accomplish what God has for you. Now I think if I accomplish that, it will be a very successful week. Amen? Amen.

You know a young fellow, I think I mentioned this to you in another message, a young fellow walked up to me from Columbia, South Carolina and he said, "you remember me? And I looked at him and I 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". Amen. 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. Maybe I can convince a few of you this week.

Here comes Nehemiah. Alright, what's he going to do now? Well, he's going to pray. Nehemiah's prayer, there were four words I put it on the board this morning. "Call", everybody, say it, "Confess", "Claim", and "Commit". Now this

a very simple word outline of verses 5-11, chapter one. We're going to break it down now, and I hope you like this and I hope you'll dig into and this it will begin your work in a great many other books. Because all I'm doing is just revealing what is here. I'm not trying to bring something in that isn't here. And if I do, I used to tell my people in the churches, I was a pastor of four different churches, if they heard anything from that pulpit which was contrary to the word of God, they were to meet me in the aisle, with an open Bible. Amen, and challenge me. I have a right to reveal what God has revealed and that it is the total.

Call

Now here we go, call. Let me read the first one and a half verses of that prayer. Verse number 5, and then verse number six, in its the first half, "And said, I beseech thee, O Lord God of heaven, the great and awe inspiring God, who keepeth covenant and mercy for them who 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, I pray before thee now, day and night" (Neh. 1:5). Nehemiah called upon God. I invite you to a thorough study of Nehemiah's theology. He's not talking to a heavenly uncle. He's not taking to a big brother upstairs. He not talking to a ubiquitous 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 is 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 a 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, by that I mean praise God for all the great teaching on the Holy Spirit. Praise god for all the central teaching on Christology, but remember the Bible is also a book of theology, God himself. Now I don't mean to separate the trinity in any sense, but the emphasis is on God, our very God, and the unworthiness of this very man to even be in his presence. But this reminds him that he is a God of what? The

keeping of the promises, a covenant keeping God. And he's a God what? Of love. You say preacher that 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 the epistle teachings. The Bible teaches, "thou shall love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart." The Bible teaches, "thou shall love thy neighbor as thy self." 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 here.

You know sometimes they import me as an evangelist and they kind of think Jack's got in his brief case everything that's needed to bring about a spiritual awakening and that's about the attitude, you know we've got a wonderful leader. Listen, revival isn't worked up by a man, it's sent down by God. It isn't man engendered, it's God sent. Nehemiah began where he should begin, 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" (Mat. 16:33). That's proper priority, right?

Confession

Alright, then what happens? Well he saw himself as he really was. You can compare yourself to every other Christian in this place and come out 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 what? Isaiah when he saw that high and lifted up vision said, "I am a man of what? unclean lips and I live in the midst of a people of unclean lips, for mine eyes have seen the king." (Isa. 6:5) Now we see Nehemiah look at himself just as he should see himself and he began what? to confess his sins. Let me read it for you, he said, "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 commandedst thy servant Moses. Remember, I pray thee, the word that thou commandedst thy servant Moses, saying, If ye transgress, I will scatter you abroad among the peoples” (Neh. 1:6-8). We need a revival of private confession, every believer before God confessing his sins of thought, and word, and act. We need a revival of confession on a personal nature. When we have wronged or erred with some other person we ought to go to that person and be willing to ask for forgiveness humble ourselves and confess to one another. And then there is public confession as we will find in the book of Nehemiah. Where the sin was the 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 12 hours in length were people stood 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 thank God for them. This is confession.

Claim

But wait a minute, move on quickly, the word is "claimed." You say, “But preacher, really, I’m praying and asking God for true biblical awakening, and I confessed and as far as I know I’ve put everything under the blood, and I’m right with God. I’m right with man. I’m not perfect. I’m pardoned and I’m cleansed, but I’ve done this. And then you’ve stopped and you’ve stopped to soon. Why?

The next step in revival, remember, Nehemiah is a man who prayed for revival and got it. Want to follow him? Here we go the word claim, look in the next verse, “But if ye turn again 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 unto the place that I have chosen to set my name there”(Neh. 1:8-9). What does that mean Jack? It means this, God said, “If you sin I will punish, but God also said, if you will obey I will bless.

In a delightful little daily devotional book, which when you’ve got a broken heart, you’ll appreciate. Streams in the Desert, you’ll find a sentence that’s worth

he whole book. It says, "When we begin to obey, God begins to bless". Say it with me, "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 is not a person in this room who claims to be a Christian, who could claim to be a Christian without biblical authority. You may come down to me and say, what, now don't think I'm being critical, I am. Don't come down to me and say, "I'm a Christian because I have that feeling deep down in my heart", well I've had it many times too, though its not always there, does that mean I'm lost? A little boy came to one of my meetings and I said, son what did you do, "I opened my heart and received the lord Jesus as my savior". Great. Did you ask him to come into your heart? How'd you know? "O 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 said son how do you know? Well he said, "the Lord says, if I stand at the door and knock he will hear my voice and say come in". How do you know son? Well I know, I said, "Have you asked Jesus to come into your heart?" How do you know he came in? He looked at me as if I was the 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 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. And that was Isaac, he felt the wrong boy. You can think that one over as long as you want to. Feeling can be very, very uncertain. Yes it can. Now why as we admit this truth that begin the Christian life by claiming the scriptures, that's the basis of our salvation. Why do we forsake it after that? Why don't with live the Christian live 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 time you read the book it should be good enough to keep you living victoriously. Let's not forsake God's truth. This an old truth, this isn't some new aspect of Christian living. Nehemiah said Lord, you said if we sin 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 it. "Faith, mighty faith, the promises sees 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. And here's a man hundreds of miles removed from the place he wants 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. You know I have a crazy sense of humor. Years ago, I use to stop in New York in between trains, we don't do that anymore, but the old Thirty-fourth 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, and all these doors, in that day, were opened by that little light beam, remember? How you had that little light bean and when you broke that 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 going across the concourse. And the first thing, see I have a sense of humor, the first thing that amused me was so many people saluted when they went through. What? They didn't believe the things was going to work, and then just as soon as they broke that little light beam, the door went whoop, and you out to have seen how fast they pulled their hand out. Silly walking around with your hand in the air like this, but they really didn't believe that thing was going to work. They had to touch something, they had to what? Feel it. But it worked. Then I remember going into the turnpike restroom and washing my hand and looking around for the towels. No towels. What in the world kind of a restroom is this?

There was 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 around to see if there's anyone else in there. Sure enough right underneath that little white box was that little beam of light and just as soon as you shoved your hands up there zhzhzhhhh. You got all the heat you want. Worked didn't it? But you can stand there all day and say I don't believe it. I don't believe it. And you never could prove it, never could claimed it. But the best one is drinking fountains. Nothing to step on. Nothing to turn, just says, "drink". Right across the top of that fountain is that little beam of light. Now you do look around, see if anybody going to watch you. Who wants to be caught sucking on a dry nozzle? But sure enough, just as soon as you drop that old snahze of yours down there, woololwo. Most of the time you went up and looked 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 believe it,

If there's a dear one here today who's never trusted Christ, you'll never have salvation, unless you claim what God said. Amen? Amen. And Christian think of all the things you're missing by not claiming. Here's a man in an impossible situation He said I believe. I believe God who scattered us, can also restore us. I'm going to lay claim to the promises of God.

Commit

All the rest of the book is the amplification of it. Marvelous. Now one more word and then I'm through because the time is almost up. Commit, in the light of this, Nehemiah says this, "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 now, 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" (Neh. 1:10-11). We find in these verses, as shown later, that Nehemiah personally

made a complete and absolute commitment to God's providence and destiny and sovereignty and guidance. He, as it were, drew a circle around him and said, "Lord take everything inside this circle. And I want to put myself at your disposal. Now you do with me what you want to do. And the thrilling thing is the whole book is what God did with the man who made that full commitment. Amen? Aright now the time is up, isn't that awful?"