

Four Men With a Vision

by Denny Kenaston

God's restoration and recovery of His testimony is achieved through dreams and visions, infusing faith in the hearts of His people.

Duration: 1:27:22

Scripture: Ezra 9:3, Matthew 6:33

Topics: "Vision"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker opens with a call to open the Bible to the book of Ezra. The title of the message is 'Form in with a vision' with the subtitle 'The recovering of the Lord's testimony.' The speaker discusses how the Lord's testimony was destroyed in the past, but now it is important for individuals to have a vision and see what God sees. The speaker emphasizes that God uses men who have a vision for His testimony and encourages diversity among believers. The sermon concludes with the reminder that God will have His witness and His testimony will prevail.

Transcript

Hello, this is Brother Denny. Welcome to Charity Ministries. Our desire is that your life would be blessed and changed by this message.

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These messages are offered to all without charge by the free will offerings of God's people. A special thank you to all who support this ministry. And I rejoice to stand before you this evening and share the word of God.

I want us to open our Bibles. We won't get there for a little bit. I want to give a little introduction, but I want us to open our Bibles to the book of Ezra.

You can just have it open there this evening. The title of my message this evening is--I'm going to give a title and a subtitle to my message this evening. So here it is, Four Men with a Vision.

Four Men with a Vision. The Recovering of the Lord's Testimony. That's the subtitle.

Four Men with a Vision set about the recovering of the Lord's Testimony. We ended last night on a bit of a sober note. As we saw, the Lord's Testimony was completely destroyed.

The people were carried away into captivity. The city burned. The stones were torn down.

The gates and walls of the city were destroyed. And the house of God is no more. But even in this, God gets glory, doesn't He? Even in that which seems to us to be an utter tragedy, God gets glory.

Because we find Him speaking through the prophets, saying words like this, When the nations around you will look and see what has happened here, they will ask, What meaneth all this that God has done to His people? And the word will go out that God has done this to His people because of their transgressions. And therefore, God again gets glory. Because He's just and He's holy and He's right.

Even in this, God gets glory because it represents His justice and His judgment. He will not put up with evil. However, God is always busy about restoration and recovery.

Have you heard Him? Have you sensed His Spirit? Have you heard His voice calling? God is always busy about restoration and recovery. We need to look, first of all, this evening, at the way God restores. God begins His restoration and His recovery when He puts dreams and visions in the hearts of men and women.

That's how God begins His work of restoration. He implants in the hearts of men and women dreams and visions. And with those visions, faith to act upon that which they see.

Not just a dream, not just a vision. No, when God puts a dream, when God puts a vision in the hearts of His people, there is also infused in that vision, faith. That is the witness of God's Spirit in the heart of man that God will do what He said He will do.

That's what faith is. That's a good practical definition of faith. God puts in with that vision, He infuses faith.

That is the witness in man's heart that God will do what He said He will do. God looked down upon Abraham and said, Abraham, I will make you a father of many nations. Those words were not just words.

Those were words of vision. And that vision was infused with an element of faith which caused Abraham to believe. And that's the way it is with all dreams and visions.

What we see here today is a result of God's work in the hearts of a few men and the faith which was inspired in their hearts. That which was at one time not here to be seen is now here for everyone to look upon. That is how God goes about His work of restoration and recovery.

Now, a vision is a mental and spiritual image pressed upon the heart by God's Spirit through His Word. It is a mental and a spiritual image pressed upon the heart, written upon the table, the fleshly tables of our heart, by God's Spirit through His Word. And if God has written some of those things on your heart, blessed art thou, dear brother and sister, blessed art thou that God has taken His finger and written something upon your heart that you cannot get away from.

That's what a vision is. You can't shake it. You can't get away from it.

It's part of your very being. It's something that you see. It's before the eyes of your heart continually.

Why? Because God has written it on the fleshly table of your heart by His Spirit. 2 Corinthians chapter 3. Well, we're going to look at four men who had this very experience in their lives this evening. A vision is that which you see with the eyes of your heart.

It is seeing what God sees and what God wants. I feel we just need to give a little bit of time to this Word before we move forward because whatever is going to be done here in this congregation in the days ahead, in the years ahead, in the future of this congregation, it will only be done by that which God puts in your heart. That's it.

You know, you're not very old. You're just here a few years. But there's lots of young people and there's children all over this room.

If this place stands twenty years from now and is a safe place for your children's children to raise their children, it will only happen one way. If God by His finger through His Spirit and His Word writes upon the tables of your hearts and on the tables of the hearts of the young people that are in this room something beautiful, something glorious, something heavenly. That's the only way it will happen.

Vision. It is a seeing things that be not as though they already are. Romans chapter 4. That's what a vision is.

Seeing things that be not as if they already are. Hallelujah. When God wants to do something, He moves upon His people, putting spiritual visions in their heart, and with those visions, the faith to see them already done.

And with that combination, actions take place. See, that's how it's supposed to work. Just like that.

Not just actions, but God places something inside of the heart. The heart begins to see. The heart begins to see something that is from God.

Something that is from God but is not in reality. It could be anything. It could be a personal vision in your own heart.

Maybe God begins to give you a vision of what a man could do in the area of soul winning. Maybe God would put that upon your heart and as God puts that upon your heart, He begins to work it out in reality in your life because when God puts something in the heart, He infuses it with faith. That is the witness of God's Spirit.

And when you have the witness of God's Spirit in your heart saying, this is what I'm going to do, that will move you to actions. That's what vision does. That's how God gets His work done.

That's how God moves things forward. That's how God begins to work underneath the dust and rubble of something that was one day but is there no more. God begins to work underneath the rubble of all of those things and begins to raise up something that you can see with the human eye again.

Vision that moves you to action. Paul said it this way, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision. And that is the testimony of Paul's life.

Those heavenly visions drug that man all over the known world of his day. He had no choice in the matter because of what he saw and he couldn't help himself but be obedient to that heavenly vision. God is calling us to do the same thing, brothers and sisters.

Praise God for what He has done in this place, but oh, God is not done. He is not done. So, let's look at the recovery of this house, this people, this city, that last evening was rashed to the ground and the people were carried away into captivity and in a sense an absolute disgust to God.

Let's look at the recovery of these people and this house and this city. Seventy years have passed and God begins to stir. It's time to restore.

It's time to rebuild. It's time to recover the Lord's testimony and God begins to stir. And guess where He begins to stir? We read it last evening there at the end of 2 Chronicles.

He begins to stir in the heart of a heathen king. God even will do that to recover the testimony of the Lord. He begins to stir in the heart of a heathen king.

We read His proclamation and His decree last night. 42,000 people responded to the king's proclamation. 42,000 Jews said, I'll go.

Now that may sound like a lot of people, but if you realize how many people were there in the land of the Chaldeans in Babylon, if you realize how many people were there, it wasn't that many people. But 42,000 sincere people, may I say this evening, the remnants of God's sincere Israelites rose up in response to the king's proclamation and said, I'll go. They had to be willing to make a 500 mile trip through lots of wilderness and lots of dangerous territory to get back to the city of Jerusalem.

I want you just to use your imagination a little bit here this evening. Imagine what it looked like when they pulled into Jerusalem. Have you ever walked into a house that hasn't been lived in for 70 years? I'm telling you, you've got to have a lot of vision if you buy a house that hasn't been lived in for 70 years.

You better have a vision when you walk in there. They pulled into the city of Jerusalem. The walls are broken down.

The gates are burned. There is no temple there. Many of the buildings inside of the city, all of the stones have been taken down.

Everything has been burned that can be burned. There's cobwebs everywhere. There's dust everywhere.

There's animals living in this corner and living in that corner. It is in absolute disarray. And God has called these 42,000 Jews to come back to the city of Jerusalem and raise up a testimony to the glory of God.

That's what God has called them to do. But just put yourself in their shoes a little bit here this evening. This is no easy task that they have embarked upon.

Seventy years of desolation is what they look upon with their eyes. Seventy years with no one living there or very few living there. There were some old men along who had lived there before and there were many, many people along who had never even seen the place because it's been 70 years, you know.

A lot happens in 70 years. Generations go and other generations come in 70 years. But there were some old men, some ancient men, the Bible says, who had been there before and came back.

This was the remnant of sincere Israelites. They dug through the rubble and started over again. Have you ever felt like you were digging through the rubble? Somehow, by God's grace, stirring inside the hearts of men and women, we find the grace to dig through the rubble and start all over again.

Blessed be God! That's what they did. First, they built an altar and began to offer sacrifices right out in the open. Then they laid the foundation of the temple with shoutings of praise and weepings at the same time.

In fact, the Bible says you couldn't tell the difference. Some of the weeping was so loud that you couldn't tell the difference between those that were shouting for joy and those that were weeping for grief. And those that were weeping for grief were the ones who remembered what that temple used to look like.

Oh, that God would raise up a few men and women who would weep because they remember what the temple used to look like. They wept. They wept aloud.

The Bible says it made a great noise. These people were sincere. They wanted to do right.

I think we fit the same category tonight, brothers and sisters. Hey, we don't have it all together. Sure, there are many needs among us, but somehow God has put something inside of our hearts and we want to do that which is right.

Somehow we have seen enough of what God's will is. We've seen enough of what God wants for His church. We've seen enough of what God wants as a witness upon this earth that we're willing to get in there, dig through the rubble, and try to raise up something for the glory of God.

That's what these people were doing. They were sincere. And they began to build.

Then what happened? Does anybody know? What always happens when God's people get serious about raising up a testimony for God? What always happens, brothers and sisters? The enemy comes. Opposition from the enemy. First of all, it was the ecumenical movement.

Hey, let us build with you. That was first. Secondly, they weakened their hands and frustrated their purposes.

I'm giving you words out of the book of Ezra. They weakened their hands and frustrated their purposes. And lastly, they wrote accusations against them.

Boy, we are not ignorant of His devices, are we? If that isn't a catalog of the snares and the devices of the devil, even today I haven't read one. First the ecumenical movement, then weakening their hands with doubts and fears and you're not going to be able to do it and it will never work for you, and all of that. Then frustrating their purposes, causing all kinds of problems and hindering the work from being done.

And finally, finish them off with false accusations and get the authorities to stop them doing what they are doing. Boy, the devil has been doing that for thousands of years. A brother just told me here not long ago of this very thing happening in the area where he is as the church was trying to raise up a testimony in that area.

Oh, the devil got upset about it. Finally, they were forced to stop working. They stopped working.

The authorities came and because of the false accusations and the lies that were written, the authorities came and stopped them. That's enough. Enough.

Well, for 15 years, God's house was not built. Just imagine now. Think about that.

For 15 years. The people turned their focus on to their farms, on to their houses, on to their vineyards and their fields, their olive yards and on to their own things. And for 15 years, they worked on all of their things.

Now, you may feel strongly toward them for that, but we shouldn't judge them too harshly for two reasons. Number one, the authorities did stop them. Number two, you imagine how much work there would be if you were given a farm that hadn't been used for 70 years.

How much work would there be to get the vineyards back in shape and the olive yards and get the fields in condition again? How much work would it be? So, it was easy for them and their focus to turn to those things. And they did. For 15 years.

They built their houses. They cared for their farms. They turned the focus away from the raising up of God's testimony and put their focus on their own things.

Now, praise God this evening, there are no authorities that are stopping you from doing God's work in this area where you are. But I think it's right for us still to say and acknowledge that it's easy for us to get our focus off of the building of God's house and on to all of our things, isn't it? We can learn from them. It's very easy for that focus to change.

In fact, at times, I'm sure, we rejoice that we have a church. And you can come to church on Sunday morning and somebody gets up and shakes you back into reality. You realize, whoa, for the last three weeks, I've just been going my own and planning my things and doing my business and I hardly had time for God.

And you sit there and you rejoice that a man got up and shook you back into reality on Sunday morning. Praise God for that. The church is for that.

Ministers are for that. But it's just good for us this evening to recognize, just like they did, as sincere as they were, willing to make such a sacrifice and travel all the way back there, they still easily lost their way unto their own things. Amen, brethren? It's a good challenge to all of us.

But God couldn't leave it that way because you see, God is jealous over this witness upon the earth. And God couldn't leave it that way. He is after a recovery of His witness.

And it is not about them. It is about God. It's not about their nice houses.

It's not about their vineyards. It's not about their olive yards, even though all of those things will also bear testimony to the goodness of God. It is not about their houses.

It's about His house. Brothers and sisters, it's the same for us. It's not about our houses.

And it's not about our farms. And it's not about our businesses. And it's not about our fruit trees.

And it's not about those things. It's about His house. That's why we're here on this earth.

So God raises up a man, a prophet with a vision. The first of the four men that we want to look at here this evening, God raises up a man. His name is Haggai.

I'm not sure if I have the right pronunciation on that. I've heard his name said all kinds of ways, but I'll call him Haggai tonight. The prophet Haggai.

Let's turn to Haggai chapter 1, where we can read just a few verses as we get into these men and then into their lives. Haggai. Haggai is a harsh prophet.

He's a harsh prophet. He uses strong words. They even seem too strong when you read them.

And remember that the authorities stop them from building God's house. The words seem too strong, but they're not too strong. Strong words of rebuke come from the prophet Haggai.

And even God Himself, because He's concerned about His testimony, sends a drought upon the land to get the people's attention and to remind them that it's not about you, but this is about my house. To remind the people that you're not here on this earth for you. You are here upon this earth for God.

So God even gets involved with some strong measures to get the attention of the children of Israel. Why? Because of His testimony, brothers and sisters. Because of His testimony.

Let's read some of the words of the prophet Haggai in chapter 1, starting in verse 2. Here are his words. Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, This people say, the time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built. Time is not come.

I guess it's not for now. May it be for later. Then came the word of the Lord by Haggai the prophet, saying, Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your sealed houses, and this house lie waste? Now therefore, thus sayeth the Lord of hosts, Consider your ways.

Strong words from Haggai the prophet. Is it time for you to live in your nice houses, and my house lies waste? Consider your ways. Stop and think about what you're doing, said the prophet Haggai to the people of God.

Then he reasons with them, Ye have sown much, and bring in little. Ye eat, but ye have not enough. Ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink.

Ye clothe you, but there is none warm. And he that earneth wages, earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes. Now that's quite a discouraging experience.

If you could just imagine going to work, working all week long, putting your money in a bag, and heading home on Friday night. And by the time you get home, two-thirds of what you put in the bag falls out on the way home. And you only have one-third by the time you get there.

And that isn't one week, that's another week, and another week, and week after week after week. That was the experience that God was bringing to bear upon the people of God because their focus was on them, not on His testimony. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, again, consider your ways.

Go up to the mountain and bring wood and build the house and I will take pleasure in it and I will be glorified, saith the Lord. See the heart of God in that verse. See His heart.

Go and build my house and I'll take pleasure in my house and I will be glorified by my house. That's what is important. O children of Israel, that's what is important.

I am what is important. My house is what is important. My testimony.

Ye looked for much and lo, it came to little. And when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it. Why? saith the Lord of hosts.

Why? Because mine house lieth, that is waste, and ye run every man unto his own house. Therefore the heaven over you is stayed from dew and the earth is stayed from fruit. And I called for a drought upon the land and upon the mountains, upon the corn, and upon the new wine and the oil, and upon that which the ground bringeth forth, and upon men, and upon cattle, and upon all the labor of thine hands.

Strong words from a harsh prophet. I mean, think about the words that he said. Men get thrown out of churches today for saying things like that.

Strong words from the prophet Haggai. But his words were like a shock treatment to the children of Israel that wake them out of their sleep. God got through to their hearts through his strong words.

And it was like a shock to them and it awoke them out of their sleep. And the people began to build. They turned their focus away from all of their things and turned their focus again on building the house of God.

And the people began to build. And guess what happened? More persecutions, more troubles, more frustrations, more threats, more warnings came from the people in the land around them. Temptations to faint and quit.

They were real temptations to faint and just to quit. Then God raises up another prophet. A very different man than the prophet before him.

Very different than the other one. His name was Zechariah. Zechariah, he's not a rebuking, challenging prophet.

No, they don't need that anymore. They heard the Word of the Lord and responded to the strong words of Haggai and turned the focus toward the building of the house of God. Now they want to build.

Now their hearts are engaged. But persecutions are coming and troubles are coming upon them. They don't need another strong prophet to stand up there and rebuke them for being afraid or rebuke them because they're worried about their children or rebuke them for this or that.

No, that's not what they need. They're doing the right thing. They want to do the right thing.

So God sends a different kind of prophet to them now. But nevertheless, another prophet. And his name is Zechariah.

He is an encouraging, inspiring, motivating prophet. They don't need to hear strong words of rebuke now. They're there.

They've picked up the trowel. They're ready to go. They've gathered their timbers out of the forest and they're ready to build.

But persecutions come to them again like they always do when you get busy about God's Word. Isn't that the way it is? Isn't it that way here? Sure it is. Listen, you can tell whether you're going the right way just by all the fuss and carrying on that takes place when you get up and start moving.

That should be an encouragement. We must be doing something right. But the reality is that those persecutions and those threats and those weakening words of doubt and all the things that come our way when we try to get busy in God's Work, those things do have an effect on you and they do discourage you and they make your hands hang down and you're tempted to just back off.

Just back off. It's easier if you just back off. Slow down.

Don't be so radical. But it is during those times that God sends words of encouragement and God sent words of encouragement through the prophet Zachariah to the children of Israel. Oh, I like Zachariah.

He's one of my favorite prophets. Zachariah. First, you want to flip over there? That's just one page over.

Haggai is only two pages. First of all, Zachariah focuses on their hearts. I like this.

You know, it's not just go build a building somewhere. That's not the way it is with God. God's concerned about their hearts.

And so Zachariah begins with these words in verse 2. The Lord hath been sore displeased with your fathers. Therefore say thou unto them, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Turn ye unto Me, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will turn unto you, saith the Lord of hosts. In other words, let's get our hearts focused right upon God.

And brothers and sisters, that is a word of encouragement to every one of us here this evening also. Because there is a danger to get busy in doing this and doing that when all the time our heart is not right with God. So God sends the prophet Zachariah there with a word of encouragement and says, God says to you, Turn ye unto Me, and I will turn unto you.

And God says that to us this evening also. Then He gives them words of vision. Now you have to look at the context here.

These people are being persecuted. These people are being troubled. These people are filled with fear.

They are living in enemy territory. You know? I mean, there are not very many of them. You know, it's a whole bunch of them and not very many of us.

And here we are living in a city that is broken down and without walls. So God sends a word of encouragement in chapter 1 of verse 13. Look what God says through Zachariah.

And the Lord answered the angel that talked with Me with good words and comfortable words. Oh, I love that. You see that, Manny? Good words and comfortable words.

Didn't beat them. Didn't scold them. Good words and comfortable words is what God is saying to these people who want to do what is right.

They're not doing everything right. They're struggling to do right. They're probably even failing.

They're fainting in their hearts. They're tempted to give up and quit again. But God knows their heart and He sends a prophet to give to them good words and comfortable words.

Hallelujah! That's a good lesson to all of us ministers. Amen? Yeah, sometimes you need to skin the people. I agree with that.

But listen, you got a bunch of people who want to go the right way, they need to be inspired and stir it on in what they're doing. That's what God did through Zachariah. So the angel that communed with Me said unto Me, Cry thou, prophesy thou, cry out.

Go stand on the street corner, Zachariah, and prophesy. Beautiful, beautiful. Saying, Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, I am jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great jealousy.

Hear the heart of God. Why is God jealous with a great jealousy over Jerusalem and over Zion? Because He's jealous for His name's sake. Tell the people, My heart is turned toward Jerusalem.

I'm jealous for Jerusalem's sake. Tell the people. And I am very sore displeased with the heathen that are at ease.

For I was but a little displeased and they have helped forward the affliction. Therefore thus saith the Lord, I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies. My house shall be built in it, saith the Lord of Hosts.

And a line shall be stretched forth upon Jerusalem. Look at those beautiful words. What is God saying? God is calling the things that be not as though they already are.

He is saying, My house shall be built. Now listen, brothers and sisters, you have to see this thing. You have to see it in its reality.

Look at it in a spiritual way. These are not just words coming out of some man's mouth that some people heard. These are the words of the God of Heaven.

These are the words coming out of the heart of God, from the throne of God, infused into the heart of a man, and breathed out into the people's hearts. How do you think it affected them? Man, it stirred them. It encouraged them.

They got new strength inside their bones. That fear they had went dispelled into the darkness and into the wilderness. Why? Because the Word of the Lord came through the prophet Zechariah.

Words of good, words of comfort to the people. My house shall be built. Do you know what that means? It means all those words out there that they're saying don't mean a thing.

My house shall be built. Now you're out there pointing your bows and arrows at us and you're out there with your spears and you're tromping out there with your horses with soldiers and all that stuff. My house shall be built! That's what it says.

Hey, listen. When the God of glory, the great God of the universe sitting on His throne says, my house is going to be built, no little pipsqueaks riding around over there on big white horses are going to do a thing to stop God from building His house. Amen? Amen.

It's that way for us too, brothers and sisters. Jesus said, on this rock I will build my church. He promised.

It will be. God doesn't lie. Good and comfortable words.

Hallelujah. Oh, I like that. That stirs my soul.

See, I lost my place here. These words were sure words. These words were words of promise to the people of God.

It's the same today, brothers and sisters. God will have His witness upon the earth. God will have His witness in this community where you live.

God will have it. Nothing can stop us sincere ones who really want to go on with and do all of God's will. Nothing can stop us.

These words speak words of encouragement to our hearts even today. A remnant who see more than what we see with our eyes as we look around us. But somehow inside of our hearts we just believe God wants to do more than what He's doing in present day Christianity.

Zechariah 2. Look there. Put yourselves in their shoes for just a moment. You're in a city that is broken down and without walls.

You're listening to the adversaries saying words like this. We are going to get you and dash your children on the rocks. If you don't stop building that house, you are going to be finished.

We're warning you. We are warning you. Here they are living in a city that's broken down and without walls.

How do you sleep at night? You know, it's pretty easy to sleep when there's walls around the city and watchmen on the walls. But when there's no walls, how do you sleep? God speaks words of protection to His people through the prophet Zechariah 2. I lifted up mine eyes again and looked, and behold, a man with a measuring line in his hand. Then said I, with a ghost thou, and he said unto me, To measure Jerusalem, to see what is the breadth thereof and what is the length thereof.

That sounds like good things to me. I'm going to go measure the city. And behold, the angel that talked with me went forth and another angel went out to meet him and said unto him, Run! Speak to this young man saying, Jerusalem shall be in hell.

You are secure! God spoke these words to the children of Israel. And you have to understand, this prophecy in Zechariah, it's 14 chapters long. It's one of the larger prophetic books.

It took a few years to finish building the temple. God just kept speaking through the prophet Zechariah words just like this. We can't look at them all this evening.

It's two or three messages worth. But I'm just showing you how God used this man who had a clear vision on what God wanted to do. God used this man to infuse the people of God with the courage and the strength to get up again and keep on going in the midst of all kinds of trials and persecutions.

Giving them words of promise. I will take care of you. I will strengthen you.

I'll put a wall of fire around your city. You're worried about the city you're living in, O people of God, because the walls are broken down? Let me tell you something. I'll put a wall of fire around about you.

You are the apple of My eye. He that touches you, touches the apple of My eye. Relax! Don't fear! These are the kind of words that God spoke to the children of Israel.

Why? Why? Because He wanted His house to be built. Because He wanted a house to be built that would represent His holy name upon this earth. Dear brothers and sisters, God has not changed.

God wants His house to be built that will be a holy representation of Himself upon this earth. And I'm telling you, God will run to the aid of any people who desire such things as that, though they stumble along sometimes and don't know what they're doing. God will run to their aid because He's jealous.

Let's look at leadership for a moment. There was a man in Jerusalem. His name was Joshua.

He was the high priest in Jerusalem. Now, put yourself in his shoes for a little bit before you get too tough on him. You know, he's a leader.

He is the leader. He ought to have his act together. He's the high priest.

But put yourself in his shoes for a moment. He's been in captivity all of his life, probably. He probably never saw Jerusalem.

He never had a temple to go to. He never had any other priests who could train him in how the temple is supposed to be operated. He knows none of these things.

And here he is in Jerusalem. And a task has been given to him. You're the high priest.

We're building this house. And you're going to make sure everything runs the way it's supposed to run. And this high priest named Joshua is feeling absolutely inadequate.

Do you ever feel that way? We get a glimpse here in chapter 3 into the deep, inside look into the deep feelings of the heart of the leader. And we're not just looking at Joshua's heart here this evening. There's some other hearts that feel the same way.

I know that I can relate to Joshua in this chapter. And he showed me Joshua, the high priest, standing before the angel of the Lord. And Satan standing at his right hand to resist him.

Now, I want you to note how Satan is resisting him. This is a good lesson in personal spiritual warfare that most people have never learned. Satan standing at his right hand to resist him.

And the Lord said unto Satan, The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan, even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee. Is not this a bran plucked out of the fire? Hallelujah. Yes, Lord.

Now, Joshua was clothed with filthy garments and stood before the angel. This is how he feels. That's how he feels.

What can I do? What good am I? I don't know what I'm doing. What am I doing in this place? How am I going to do this? He's standing there with filthy garments. You ever feel that way? You ever feel that way when it's time to get up and preach? The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan, you condemning, accusing spirit.

The Lord rebuke thee. And he answered and spake. Verse 4, And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him.

And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment. And I said, Let them set a fair mitre upon his head. So they set a fair mitre upon his head and clothed him with garments.

And the angel of the Lord stood by. And the angel of the Lord protested unto Joshua saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, If thou wilt walk in my ways, and if thou wilt keep my charge, then thou shalt also judge

my house and shalt also keep my courts, and I will give thee places to walk among these that stand by. Good words to the leadership.

Good words. Oh, how many times the enemy stands by as an accusing spirit and blasts us and tells us how no count we are. But let me tell you something.

That's not what God says. That's not what God says. There was another man in leadership there in that place.

His name was Zerubbabel. He was the king. If there was a king, he was the ruler in the city.

He was also feeling exactly the same way. What can I do? How can I be the king? I've never seen what a king acts like. How can I be the king? And God said to him in verse 6 of chapter 4, Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This is the word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts, Who art thou, O great mountain, before Zerubbabel? Thou shalt become a plain, and he shall bring forth the headstone thereof with shoutings crying, Grace! Grace! Isn't that beautiful? Here's a man who's a leader, called to be a king.

Doesn't know what to do. Nobody ever showed him what to do. Ever feel that way, brethren? How am I going to do what needs to be done? How can I say it the way it needs to be said? How can I make this correction that needs to be done? How can I guide the people of God? How can I do it the right way? No one ever showed me.

I wasn't trained. I don't know any of these things. And God says to you, just like He said to Zerubbabel, O Zerubbabel, it's not by might, that is, by human abilities, nor by power, that is, a man's human wisdom, but it is by my Spirit, saith the Lord.

And if you will be filled with my Spirit, saith the Lord, you will shout, Grace! Grace! As you finish your task of building the house of God in your generation. It's all done. All said and done.

You'll look back and shout, Grace! Grace! Nothing of me. All of Him. Amen? Good words and comfortable words this evening to us who desire to go the right way, who want to see the Lord's testimony raised up upon the earth.

It's good words and comfortable words to us through the prophet Zechariah. You ever have those accusing spirits beating you? They do, you know. Well, there are 14 chapters here in the book of Zechariah with far-reaching prophetic meaning in them.

And there's much more in these words that I'm giving to you than just the words to the children of Israel in that day. Yet, very much of what is in the book of Zechariah was spoken to the children of Israel by God through Zechariah for their very present health in time of need. That's the nature of the prophetic.

It can minister exactly to the need that they're facing at that very moment, yet have eternal implications thousands of years down the road. Hallelujah! Hallelujah! That's the way God's Word is. It's eternal.

It never dies. It never falls to the ground. Ah, good and comfortable words.

There shall yet old men and old women dwell in the streets of Jerusalem and every man with his staff in his hand for a very age. You're all going to be living there long enough that there will be all kinds of old men and old women there, said God to the children of Israel in chapter 8. The streets of the city shall be

full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof. Hallelujah! Thus saith the Lord of hosts, if it be marvelous in the eyes of the remnant of this people in these days, should it also be marvelous in mine eyes, saith the Lord.

Thus saith the Lord of hosts, behold, I will save my people from the east country and from the west country. And many other words we could read here this evening. Well, these good and comfortable words coming out of the prophet Zechariah were used by God to keep the children of Israel moving forward.

And the house was finished. But God was not finished with His witness and His testimony. Praise God for the house.

But God was not finished with His witness and His testimony. He began to stir in the heart of another man. He began to prepare another man.

And in fact, years ahead of time, brethren, God was preparing the heart of a man named Ezra to fulfill a vital role in the raising up of God's testimony. His name was Ezra. Ezra the scribe.

He was a very different man. He was not like Haggai, a scolding, harsh prophet. He was not like Zechariah, a comforting, encouraging prophet.

He was a teacher of the law. A scribe. In fact, it says, I believe it's in chapter 7, he was a ready scribe in all the law of Moses.

This man prepared himself for the work that God had called him to do. He was in the lineage of the high priest. You can read it there in Ezra chapter 7. But in Ezra chapter 7, in Ezra chapter 7 and verse 10, we read his credentials.

Some people hang their credentials on the wall. Doctor so-and-so graduated from this college. They put all that stuff on the wall.

Here's Ezra's credentials. Chapter 7 and verse 10. By the way, if you aspire to the ministry, you go after these credentials.

Ezra 7 verse 10. For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord and to do it and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments. There's his credentials.

Number one, he prepared his heart. Number two, he sought the law of his God. Number three, he did the law of his God.

And number four, now he's ready to teach his statutes and commandments in Israel. That is the perfect combination for ministry, brothers and sisters. Right there.

Prepare your hearts and seek to understand God's Word. And after you understand it, do it. And after you've tasted of the honey, go tell somebody else about it.

That's how it works. Ezra was a ready scribe in the law of Moses. Chapter 7 verse 6 says, This man Ezra, he leads another group of priests and Levites back to Jerusalem with what burden? With a burden to sanctify the people.

That was Ezra's burden. Praise God, the people are there. Praise God, the city is there.

Praise God, there are things happening there. And even praise God, there's a house there now. And there's sacrifices there.

But what about the people? What about the people? We must sanctify the people. So Ezra leaves the land of captivity with a large body of priests and Levites. And they go back to Jerusalem.

When they arrive, sad news falls upon his ears as soon as he gets there. And he finds out that many of the men, even the leaders, have taken wives of the heathen. The words are given this way in the Scripture.

And these are not little words. Ezra's note, the holy seed hath mingled themselves with the people of the land. What a sad story.

In light of the testimony of God, the holy seed hath mingled himself with the people of the land. What a definition of modern day American Christianity. Ezra's response is one of the most awesome responses that you'll find in the Bible.

Very strong response. Very broken. Very intercessory.

And I like that. It was strong, no doubt. He was broken.

But he was intercessory. That was the motive of his heart. He was intercessory.

Hear his response in chapter 9 in verse 3. By the way, if you go through the book of Ezra, you'll find that the house of God or the temple is mentioned 65 times in this little book. Just for you Bible students. Chapter 9 in verse 3. Let's read the response of this man who has a vision for God's witness upon the earth.

And when I heard this thing, I rent my garment and my mantle and plucked off the hair of my head and of my beard and sat down astonished. Children, do you know what it feels like to pull your hair out? You brethren that have a beard, do you know what it feels like? You know, when little baby Johnny or Susie is in your arm and you're walking somewhere and they get enamored with the hair on your face and they put their little fingers in there and yank. What's it feel like? I mean, you go like this real fast.

It hurts! This man pulled the hair out of his head and yanked out the hair out of his beard. I don't think he yanked it all out, but I think that the picture there and the people were watching him, many of the people were watching him. He just grabbed his head like this and yanked his hair out and threw it on the ground and grabbed his garment and ripped the thing in two and grabbed his beard and pulled the hair out in anguish of soul.

Why? Because he was jealous for the testimony of his God. That's why. That's the only motivation that would make a man do that.

He was jealous for his God. And he sat down astonished. Then were assembled unto me every one that trembled at the words of God.

Brother, tremble at the words of the God of Israel because of the transgression of those that had been carried away. And I sat astonished until the evening sacrifice. He just sat there all day long.

He didn't say a word. And at the evening sacrifice, I arose up from my heaviness and having rent my garment and my mantle, I fell upon my knees and spread out my hands to the Lord my God and said, O

my God, I am ashamed and blushed to lift up my face to Thee, my God, for our iniquities are increased over our head and our trespasses grown up into the heavens. Notice his intercessory heart there.

He's not talking to God about what they did. It is our iniquity and our transgression and I am ashamed to lift up my face to Thee. The testimony is not complete yet.

We've got to strengthen some things out here. It's not enough to have a nice building sitting somewhere that people can drive by and say, Oh, did you see what those people put up? Look at the building those people put up. Man! Isn't that something? It's not enough to be able to put up a building that people can see.

What about the people in it? The people in it must be sanctified. The Holy Seed must be separate from the world around them. It must be that way.

God has not changed. That wasn't a man responding to those things. That was God working inside of that man.

You see the heart of God inside of that Ezra in his response to the evil that he saw there. God has not changed. He's still the same.

He's jealous over the sanctity of His people who are supposed to represent His holy name. These men are very different, aren't they? Very different. They all have the same.

It's not enough to have a building. It's not enough to have the sacrifices. It's not enough to have the singing and the four.

God wants a sanctified people, brothers and sisters. God is after a sanctified people. Listen to me tonight.

I know it's not that way in every heart in this room, but I'm just here to tell you where God is going with every one of you if you're going to hang around here. God wants a people in this place where it can be said of every one of you, they are sold out to God. Not perfect.

Not that they never stumble, but their hearts are consecrated to the Lord their God. God wants a sanctified people like that. It is the will of God that every child of God in the church of Jesus Christ be dedicated, consecrated, set apart for God and Him alone.

That's God's will. That's where God is going. And I know it's not that way with everybody in this room, but I'm just telling you where God's going.

That's the way it is. Let's go on to the last man here this evening. Time is getting on.

The testimony is not complete. Ezra did some beautiful things. The people responded rightly.

I mean, they responded radically. Put away these strange women and their children. They responded radically.

But God is not done with His testimony yet. The city lacks order. The city has no walls.

And a city without walls is not a city. In those days, the city has no gates. What kind of a city is that that has no gates? If you have no gates, that means anybody or anything that wants to go in or go out can.

No gates! Very vulnerable. No order. No walls.

No gates. No gatekeepers. None of that.

God begins to stir in a man's heart again and prepare him ahead of time by putting the burden and the vision in his heart. And it's so clear with Nehemiah that God had put the burden and the vision in his heart ahead of time. And that's the way it is.

Maybe there's stirrings inside of your own heart. Why do you think God, what does all this mean? You just let God keep stirring. In due time, you'll know why He's stirring in your heart like that.

Let's turn over to Nehemiah. We're just laying the groundwork these days, Monday, Tuesday. God begins to stir in a man's heart.

His name is Nehemiah. He's a serious man. He's not a prophet.

He's not a priest. He's not a scribe. He's a ruler.

A leader. An organizer. That's what Nehemiah is.

He's one who can mobilize people, organize people, and make things happen. God needs those too. Not just prophets, and priests, and teachers, and scribes, but men with leadership ability.

And they don't have to be a prophet, by the way. They don't have to be a prophet to be one of those leaders. Some brethren come from Jerusalem, back to Shushan, the palace, and Nehemiah is the king's cupbearer.

And he asked them how Jerusalem is. And they said unto me in verse 3 of chapter 1, The remnant 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.

And 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. Look at His response. You think that was just out of nowhere? No.

The vision was already in His heart. The vision for God and for God's testimony, God's witness upon the earth, it was already in His heart. And when He heard those words, it overcame Him.

The burden landed upon Him. He couldn't bear it. And said, I beseech Thee, O Lord God of Heaven, the great and terrible God that keepeth covenant and mercy for them that love Him and observe His commandment.

Let Thine ears 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 for the children of Israel, Thy servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel which we have sinned against Thee. Both I and my Father's house have sinned. And he goes on in his intercessory prayer.

And as near as I can tell, as I've studied the chronology of these books, and it's a bit difficult to keep up with where things are, but as near as I can tell it, Nehemiah prayed for 120 days before he went before the king. But if you knew who the king was, you'd know why he prayed 120 days. It's the same king who

married Queen Esther where everybody was afraid because if he don't lift up his scepter as a way of pleasing acceptance when you're around, you're dead! You're just dead! That's all there is to it! So he prayed for 120 days and went before the king.

It's also interesting to me, he prayed 120 days. It took 52 days to rebuild the walls in the city of Jerusalem. You suppose we could learn something from that? Twice as much prayer to go along with so much work.

I wonder how that would change things. Well, he went before the king. He goes before the king for permission to go and rebuild the walls and the gates of Jerusalem and to organize the people into a functioning city.

He also, with a group of men and people, traveled to Jerusalem. He arrives there. He doesn't tell them what he's doing at first.

Greets everyone. Goes to bed that night. Gets up early in the morning.

Chapter 2 and verse 13. And I went out by night by the gate of the valley even before the dragon well and to the dung fort and viewed the walls of Jerusalem which were broken down and the gates thereof were consumed with fire. What he does is he goes out in the middle of the night in the early morning hours and he looks over the situation.

That's what leaders do. He views the wall. Goes all the way around the city.

That part is broken down. That part over there is broken down. Look at the big gap over there.

These gates are burned. And he evaluates the whole situation. Oh, brothers and sisters, if you could just get a little bit of a glimpse.

If you could see those holes in the walls of the city of Jerusalem as holes in the lives of God's people. Maybe it would help you to evaluate the situation a bit more. There needs to be some men who get up in the middle of the night and walk around the city and look at all the holes that are in the walls and to watch the gates and see how they're broken down and weep over the condition of the city.

There needs to be some men that do that. So Nehemiah, he viewed the work and then he gathered all the people together the next morning and laid out the plan. Told them about the vision that God had put in his heart.

And that vision God put in his heart. And when he shared those words of that vision that God put in his heart, those words were like a flame of fire in the hearts of the people of God. It inspired them.

They wanted to do something. I like that. Here was their response.

Let's see. Verse 17, Then said I unto them, Ye see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lieth waste, and the gates thereof are burned with fire. Come, let us build up the wall of Jerusalem that we be no more reproached.

Good, Nehemiah. Amen. Do it.

He inspired them. Come on. Let's do it.

Then I told them of the hand of my God which was good upon me, as also the king's words that he had spoken unto me. And they said, Let us rise up and build so they strengthen their hands for this good work. Hallelujah.

Look at that. But, look at the next verse, When Sanballat the Hornite and Tobiah the Servant the Amorite and Gashem the Arabian heard it, they laughed us to scorn and despised us and said, What is this thing that they do? Will they rebel against the king? And over in chapter 4, they said these words, Will they make an end in a day? Will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which they burned? What do these feeble Jews? Will they revive the stones out of the rubble? Yes, they will, Sanballat and Tobiah. Yes, they will.

And I'll tell you why they will. They will revive those stones out of the rubble because there is a living God in heaven who is looking down upon those stones and those stones will come up out of the rubble and become a wall again and new gates will be built and that city will stand as a testimony to the glory of God. But, as soon as they started to build, guess what happened? More trouble.

More persecution. More accusations. More threats.

And more ecumenical movement. After they got the whole thing built and Sanballat and Tobiah looked on and said, Oh, they did it. They did it.

We have to change our tactics. Hey, let's be brothers. Let's be brothers.

We'll work together at this thing. You want to have a city? You want to have order here? Let's be brothers. Let's work together at this thing.

And Nehemiah knew what to do because he wasn't just a leader. He was a godly leader who had a vision for the glory of God's testimony. And he said, We have nothing to do with you fellas.

Nothing at all. Nothing. It's a good lesson for all of us to learn.

The wall was finished in 52 days. He said in order things that were lacking there in the city, there was more to be done and there was more persecutions that they went through. He settled the disputes there in the city.

Ordered the tithe for the priests and the Levites. Ordered a time for seeking God. And had two weeks of revival meeting.

Sought God at His Word. A mighty revival took place. Ezra and other men stood and preached.

Half the day, and the Bible says, for half the day they heard the Word of God and for half the day they spent confessing their sins. Then the next day, half the day they heard the Word of God and the other half of the day they spent confessing their sins. I wonder what kind of a revival would break out even here in this place if we did that for two weeks.

Four men with a vision to recover the Lord's testimony. What can we learn from it? Brothers and sisters, what can we learn this evening? Oh yes, I'm sure we've been inspired this evening to just look at that whole thing and realize how much God was in it and how many relating points there are to what we are even doing in this place today. It's inspiring! What can we learn from it? A few things very quickly.

Number one, God uses men. God uses men. And I see a few of them around here this evening.

God uses men. But not just any man. Men in whom beats a vision for God and His testimony upon the earth.

Those are the men that God uses. Number two, God uses different men. We're not all the same.

We don't want to be all the same. God uses different men. And it's okay if we're not all the same.

And we need to give each other the room to not be the same. One brother may skin you with his words, and another one comes along and encourages and comforts you. Don't look at the one and say, he's wrong and he's right.

God uses different men in different ways. Sometimes we need a good skinning. Amen? Amen? I know, I know.

It's no fun to get skinned. I agree. But sometimes we need a good skinning.

Number three, He will have His witness. Can you see the persistent perseverance of the God of Heaven? He will have His testimony. He will! It's not a matter of whether it will be.

It's a matter of who will He use. But He will have it. And I know you're down the road a few years, but there's a couple sitting here from a little church that's just getting on their feet.

And I'll tell you what, this is like fire in their bones tonight. Because they're really facing it. Those little churches, they really face it.

Are we going to make it or not? You know, this is like fire in their bones tonight. He will have His testimony. Next, the people had to respond.

Though God used men, the people had to respond to those men. Those different men, with their different ministries, the people had to respond to those men. And it's also that way with us, isn't it? We also have to respond.

If God is going to build His house, we have to respond to what we see and what we hear. And God uses men. And these men will lead us.

We have to respond to that leadership. And I'll just say this, and this is not in my notes, but I think I know the hearts of the men that lead this congregation, your leaders here. They're not perfect, I'm sure about that.

Because I know them. My dear brothers and sisters, if you've got a bunch of men who have a heart like this, then get behind them and support them with all you've got. People search high and low the whole country around to find one of them like that.

If you have three or four of them, you better take care of them. That's extra. Next, God will honor the work of our hands.

Even though we stumble around and we make mistakes and sometimes we don't know what we're doing and sometimes we hurt somebody as we try. And we're not seasoned ministers. And we haven't been doing this for 20 years.

But God will honor the work of our hands because of the motive of our heart. He will honor it. I'm telling you, you will honor it.

Be encouraged. And lastly this evening, we will also have adversaries. You can count on it.

We will have adversaries. We need to learn how to deal with adversaries. We need to learn how to deal with that condemning, accusing spirit that beats us and debilitates us so that we don't feel like we're worth doing anything and so we don't do anything.

We need to learn how to deal with that and all the other adversaries that come against the church. Because they do. They do.

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