

Nehemiah - Service for God

by John Hunter

Nehemiah's book is a personal account of his service for God, highlighting the importance of knowing God, confession, repentance, and sacrifice in serving him.

Duration: 54:28

Scripture: Nehemiah 1:1-4, Nehemiah 1:8-10, Mark 3:14, Acts 1:15

Topics: "Service for God"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the importance of building a community rather than just physical walls. He emphasizes that it is not enough to protect what is inside, but to also create a community of people who will live and work together for God. The speaker refers to the city of Jerusalem, once a great city but now in ruins, as an example of the need for both physical and spiritual restoration. The sermon also highlights the story of Nehemiah, who had a burden for the city and prayed to God for four months before taking action. The speaker emphasizes the sovereignty of God in choosing Nehemiah to fulfill this task, even though he was in a different location.

Transcript

Shall we turn please to the book of Nehemiah, reading in chapter one. Nehemiah chapter one, verse one please. The words of Nehemiah the son of Hacaliah.

It came to pass in the month Chislo in the twentieth year, as I was in Shushan the palace, that Hanani, one of my brethren, came, he and certain men of Judah. And I asked them concerning the Jews that had escaped, which were left of the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem. They said unto me, 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. 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, and said. Verse one of chapter two.

It came to pass in the month Nisan in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes the king, that wine was before him. And I took up the wine and gave it unto the king. Now I had not before time been sad in his presence.

Wherefore the king said unto me, Why is thy countenance sad, seeing thou art not sick? This is nothing else but sorrow of heart. Then I was very sore afraid, and said unto the king, Let the king live for ever. Why

should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my father's sepulchers, lieth waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire? Then the king said unto me, For what dost thou make request? So I prayed to the God of heaven, and I said unto the king, If it please the king, that if thy servant have found favour in thy sight, that thou wouldst send me unto Judah, unto the city of my father's sepulchers, that I may build it.

The king said unto me, The queen also sitting by him. For how long shall thy journey be, and when wilt thou return? So it pleased the king to send me, and I set him a time. Moreover I said unto the king, If it please the king, let letters be given me to the governors beyond the river, that they may convey me over till I come into Judah.

The letter unto Asaph, the keeper of the king's forest, that he may give me timber to make beams for the gates of the palace which appertain to the house, and for the wall of the city, and for the house that I shall enter into. And the king granted me according to the good hand of my God upon me. Then I came to the governor beyond the river, and gave them the king's letters.

Now the king had sent captains of the army and horsemen with me. When St. Ballot the Horonite and Tobiah the servant the Ammonite heard of it, it grieved them exceedingly that there was come a man to seek the welfare of the children of Israel. That will suffice for the reading.

I would reckon that the book of Nehemiah is quite unique in its way in the sacred canon. He brings before us his personal account of his service for God. He tells us how he felt the need, how he responded to the call of God, and how the work was continued.

If you care to read carefully the whole of the book, you will find that in chapters one to three he's laying the foundation for the work and beginning. In chapters four to six he draws attention to the activity of the enemy and to the betrayal of friends. There is points of stress as well as points of strength.

When you come to chapter seven to the end of the book, it takes a complete turn, and he is now occupied with the city being inhabited. You see, brethren and sisters, it is one thing to build walls. It's another thing to build a community.

One thing to rear walls to protect what is inside. Another thing altogether to build a community of people who will seek to live together and to labor for God. There are possibly lots who are very anxious to build walls that are not so keen to maintain a community serving God unitedly for his own glory.

Nehemiah is quite a unique man in every way. I reckon he was on his own and the mold was broken. He was not a Nezra.

He was not a Daniel. He was not a Haggai. He was not a Malachi nor a Zachariah.

After all, God never intended him to be. He intended him to be just exactly what he was, and in his day he served God magnificently and brings before us many precious principles in relation to the service of God. It is interesting to know that his book is a constant rebuke to those of us who would begin and stop, begin again and stop.

Nehemiah began his work and he continued it. When you come to chapter 4 verse 6, half the wall is up. He stops at verse 1 of chapter 6 to give you another survey, and in verse 15 of chapter 6 we are taught that the work was finished.

So that he began, continued and completed the work that God called him to. Now I'm not going to give you a background to the book because we're not taking up the book precisely. We're taking up the man.

I want to draw your attention to the sovereignty of God. That the need was in Jerusalem, but this man was in Shushan the palace, and God is looking for someone to do a job for him. It lies far off, many miles away, but God is not raising a man on the spot.

He's sending a man from elsewhere, and it's good always to remember that somewhere, at some time, the eye of God is on a particular person or persons whom God can use to do his work. Thus it was that the continent of Africa lay in darkness and in the shadow of death. Idolatry was rampant, ignorance prevailed, and the God of heaven looked down to survey the world in the time that was then present.

And his eye left the darkness of Africa, went across oceans and continents, and the eye of God rested upon bonnie Scotland. Yonder in Blantyre, working in a mill, there's a young man called David Livingstone. Unknown, unrecognized, unheralded, and unsung.

The eye of God was upon him, and the time came when God called him to blaze a trail in Africa. That trail was blazed, and today many have entered in to the laborers of that early man. So it has always been that God will call across from the other side of the world to certain places men raised by himself, controlled by his spirit, fitted by God in every way to do the work divinely appointed.

It's wrong to think that the need will always be met in the locality. It may be, but not always. That is why there are many of us who recognize that far beyond our native shores, there lies places where the word of God can be taught, where the truth of God can be made known, where the light and wonder and richness and fullness of his word can be set before his people.

It will demand sacrifice. Thus we shall see if that will be true of this man. If you care to drop your eye please, verse 1 indicates the place where he dwelt, Shushan, the palace.

Verse 2 brings before you the questions that were asked, the exercise of his heart. Verse 3 indicates the answer that he received, and verse 4 tells you the burden that fell upon the man. I want you to note please that this man ultimately finds himself with a burden.

He makes his inquiry in verse 2 and he's told the condition of things in the city of Jerusalem, once the city of the great king, once the royal residence of the God of heaven. Now it lies in ruins, neglected and helpless. The walls are broken down, the gates thereof are burned with fire.

And when Nehemiah heard the news, verse 4, it says that he sat down, he wept outwardly, he mourned inwardly, he fasted and he prayed to the God of heaven. I want to talk to you first of all please about an approach to the work of God. I want you to first of all note that there's a burden that finds its expression in prayer.

I want you to understand please that each one of us should have a burden of some kind, no matter how small the burden may be. For after all, you haven't been left here to get on in the world. The moment that you were saved, God could have taken you to heaven.

But he left you here for a distinctive purpose, and that was that you might serve him. And if you never feel a burden, you'll never lighten a burden. You'll never build walls for God if the walls of your own life are down.

If you haven't heard the call within the sanctuary of your soul to dedicate life utterly, completely, fully and finally to the Son of God, then you're missing out. There's something radically wrong. These early years should be years that are formative, whereby God is preparing you for something bigger and better.

Let me say again what I've said time and again in these meetings. Don't take offense please. There will be no reward at the judgment seat for being a successful businessman only.

No reward at the judgment seat for being a successful executive only. You will understand, won't you please, that God never intended that you should give full time all the talents and energies and capacities that he has given to you. He never intended you to give it fully to your secular employer.

It is of course that you should work righteously, honestly and fully. But nothing would be done for God if your employer is going to get all your time and all your energy and you're exhausted and can do nothing for God. Now let me say this to you.

There is no one quite like you. You are a singular personal creation of God. You have your own talent, your own capability, your own capacities, your own abilities.

No one can do the particular thing for which God has fitted you for but you. And God intends that that should be given completely and utterly to his service. It will call for sacrifice, a word that's long since gone out of our vocabulary.

The service of God calls for sacrifice blood-red. No scars of any kind. How can you follow the crucified? No wounds of any kind in which declare your sacrificial service for God.

How on earth can you ever please the Christ that was wounded for you? Sacrifice is one of the finest primary words of Christianity and it's high time that we learned it early in life and had it written blood-red upon our minds and upon our hearts. You will notice please the burden. So much so that the man's weeping as he thinks about it.

That's right. You wouldn't hear much about a ministry of tears would you? You wouldn't hear much about men and women bowed in the presence of God weeping their eyes out as the terrific need it faces them as seen through the eyes of God. Oh the tragedy that the world is not being evangelized as it ought to be as the church lies drugged with sectarianism and with the meanness of the people of God to contribute to its work.

Shame on us that the need should be there and so few be prepared to go. The burden caused him to weep as he thought of Jerusalem. Listen to me.

Centuries later Nehemiah's Lord and your Lord and mine looked over the same city. He wept over Jerusalem and went out to sacrifice his life for it. That's it.

Are you giving your life to something for someone? It might be your Sunday school class. Please don't write it off. The lives of young people coming under your formation.

Their little minds open to receive the message of the gospel in the years when they are so retentive. Remember wherever you have in you of service may be take it into the presence of God. Drop a few tears as you utter the agony of your prayer that God might bless you now and forevermore.

I want you to note too that he began to pray. If you're going to attack for God then it begins in the sanctuary. That's where you start.

That's where it all begins. You'll need to get into the presence of God because you'll never do anything for God until you harness the resources of the Godhead on your behalf. Until you've touched the source of all, the throne of God.

And yonder he was as he bowed before the sapphire throne to claim all the resources of the Godhead on his behalf. The work was tremendous. It seemed an impossible task.

But we deal with the God of the impossible. With the God that does the things that are miraculous and wonderful. Never write yourself off.

You're probably just the person that God's looking for tonight. Here in West Richmond, may you hear the call of God, the voice of Christ. That cry that will come to your soul to rise and glow as God commands you and as Christ would direct you.

He may call you to Vancouver for God knows there's a mission right on your doorstep, isn't there? Right on your doorstep. Look out at it. Thousands of them.

They're as dark as savages. They haven't a clue. They never attend a place of worship, never go to where the Bible is read or the gospel preached.

God is a vague word in their language. Oh yes, there it is. Say, do some of you folks never think to go down to the big hotel down there where the prostitutes are hanging around the door and engage them in conversation? Give them a tract and in a few well-chosen sentences, let them know something about the love of God and the blood of Jesus and the forgiveness of sins.

The whole place is crying out for the touch of the eternal. So it may lie either here or there, on your doorstep or far away, but we'll need to begin at home. They began at Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, the uttermost parts of the earth.

There's no use going abroad if you're not doing it in Vancouver. How can you expect to win souls for Christ out there when you're doing nothing here? So it is that he began to pray. If you care to follow through, please.

Verses 5 to 7, he prays in the light of the nature of God. Verses 8 to 10, he prays in the light of the word of God. Verse 11, he prays in the light of the purpose and will of God.

His prayer is linked with the divine character. His prayer is linked with the word of God. His prayer is linked with the will and purpose of God.

He begins to pray to God. He indicates his intelligence in his use of divine titles. Will you notice, please? Verse 5, I beseech thee, O Lord, that's Jehovah.

God of Israel, that's Elohim. The great and terrible God, that is El. Verse 11, O Lord, that is Adonai.

Interesting, isn't it? Listen to me, please. If you're going anything to, if you're going to do anything in the name of God, you'll need to know the God of the name. You can't serve God if you don't know God.

So get to know God. He cries, Jehovah, the God of the covenant. The God that rescued his people out of Egypt.

The God that is personally interested in the people that belong to him. O Jehovah, the covenant God. O Jehovah, God of heaven, Elohim, the creator.

The God that created you. The God that made you. The God that knows your capacities.

That gave you your intelligence, your gifts, your ability, your capacity. The God that understands you perfectly so that he can choose the sphere of service that is suited to you. O Jehovah, the covenant God.

Elohim, the great and terrible El, E-L, God. For he is a great and terrible God. You make no mistake about it.

Great in majesty, great in glory, great in dignity, great in power. The great God. But he's a terrible God.

Terrible against his enemies. Terrible in his might and glory for you. Ah, you say, you know, he's our father.

That's right. But he's still a great and terrible God. O may God help us to bow in awe before the majesty and greatness and terribleness of deity.

This great and terrible God is your God. And he's right behind you to help you in every way. You will notice that twice in this passage, he calls him the God of heaven.

That's it. As I've said to you already, he's lifted his eyes to the sapphire throne. He's looking to the God of heaven to help him here on earth.

He's going right away to the very center, central point of the universe. Right up yonder, no higher can you go than the throne of the eternal. And he comes to the God that controls all, whose authority ranges far and wide over the universe.

And he prays to the God of heaven to help him. Listen to me, will you? I don't know why you're so afraid. There's everything going for you.

Everything. Come again, please. Quickly.

You come down now, will you? And you will notice at the close of verse 7, 6 and the opening of verse 7, he makes his confession. He confesses the sins of the children of Israel, which we have sinned. That's collective.

I, that is individual, and my father's house, so it's progressive, have sinned. Will you notice, please, that as he goes into the presence of the eternal, he is so conscious of the failure of the people that he's amongst. And there in the presence of God, he confesses the failure.

He says, we have sinned. I and my father's house have sinned. We have dealt very corruptly.

What's he doing? You'll understand this, will you? He's eating the sin offering. In the sanctuary, he's making the failures of God, his own. His own in the sense that he'll confess them to God.

He'll tell God all about them. He'll not stand. If I'll use a Western expression in an Eastern setting, he won't stand and button up his coat and say, I thank God I'm not like the rest of the Christians.

Pride. But in the presence of God, he'll eat the sin offering, associate himself with the failures of the people. Can you understand me, Leviticus 10? There's a difference between eating the sin offering and burning it.

To burn the sin offering is to stand in criticism of everybody. To eat the sin offering is to associate yourself with a people that have failed in the past but can do better and wonders in the future. Got that? Tell me, would you ever hold any meetings for confession? Are you beyond that? Any of you leading men ever stand up in God's name on behalf of the assembly and confess the failures? Did not the Lord teach his disciples when you have done all that you could say that we are unprofitable servants? That at the best of us, brethren, there's not a great deal to boast about.

And instead of getting up there boasting, boasting that you're not like the rest of Christendom, in God's name, humble your heart before the eternal. For the way to blessing is the way of confession. The way to blessing is the way of repentance.

To acknowledge we're not, nor ever will be what we should be, but God and the wonder of his mercy is prepared to use us. This is the glory of it. That's why he says, as he went about his prayer, he's the God that keepeth covenant and mercy for them that obey his commandments.

He's the God of mercy. There'd be no hope for us if he didn't take account of us, knows all about us. Oh brethren, may God lead us to the throne in humble repentance and confession.

Come again. Will you notice please in verses 8 to 10, his prayer is rooted in the word of God. Ever read your Bible to help you to pray? Will you notice please he's saying, remember I beseech thee the word that thou commandest thy servant Moses, and he's quoting the word of God to God.

Isn't that an amazing thing? That's a blow to the brethren that would tell you that you shouldn't quote the scriptures to God, that he knows them all. Can't you see that this man is coming in a spirit of lowliness? Look now again please, will you? Verse 9, he says now, thou saidst, if thou turn unto me, that's the law of repentance, and keep my commandments, the law of obedience. Toward the end of the verse, yet will I gather them from thence and bring them unto the place that I have chosen to set my name there, the law of recompense.

Have you got it? The law of repentance, the law of obedience, the law of recompense. And he's quoting God's promise, thou hast said this. I want to ask you something.

Tell me, are you able to go into the presence of God and in your prayers quote God's promise and hold them to it? After all, what are the promises in the Bible for? So his prayer had to do with the nature and character of God. Oh, he understood his God all right. His prayer is rooted in the word of God, for he had read his Bible.

And now finally in chapter 1, his prayer in relation to the will and purpose of God. O Lord, O Adonai, in all thy glorious sovereignty I beseech thee, let now thine ear be attentive unto the prayer of thy servant, and to the prayer of thy servants who desire to fear thy name. Will you notice please? Will you notice that he's associating others with him? Later on he'll tell you that when he reached Jerusalem he didn't tell any man anything.

But you see, very few are called to serve God on their own. Fellowship's a great thing. It's a wonderful thing.

That's right. You always find that. There's always fellowship.

Tell me, have you good folks ever read carefully the names of the disciples as found in Mark's gospel, in Matthew and Luke, and in Acts 1? Have you ever noted that in Mark's gospel the little word and is between every name? So that each servant stands on his own responsible to serve God, answerable and accountable to God. When you would come to Matthew and Luke they would be more or less put in pairs for two are better than one. Have you ever noted, there's only 11 in Acts 1 because Judas has been hung himself, have you ever noticed that in Acts 1 the little word and divides them into a formation of 4, 2, 2, 3? That's the formation.

4, 2, 2, 3. In other words, Acts 1 brings them forward as a team working together for God. Have you got the idea? Individually responsible yet privileged to work alongside of others. Now the close of verse 11 please.

Prosper I pray thee thy servant this day and grant him mercy in the sight of this man. Now please, he's drawing his prayer to a close and he says to God, now Lord he says prosper my way. Grant me, grant me mercy in the sight of this man.

Now stop. Who's this man? Who's this man? Well this man is Artaxerxes the greatest monarch of the day. Now when Nehemiah refers to him as this man, he's not being derogatory.

Oh not at all, not at all. But you'll understand this, that although Artaxerxes might be the greatest monarch in the universe, number one in the world as to government, he's only this man compared with the great and terrible God who occupies the sapphire throne. You see the man that does business with God recognizes that every man is just a man whose breath is in his nostrils and whose heart God can turn any way that he wishes.

He is this man. You will take note please, you will take note the closing words of chapter one. I was the king's cup bearer.

I'll explain what that means in a moment. Let me now please draw your attention to verse one of chapter one and verse one of chapter two. You will notice that the scene opens we are told in the month verse one of chapter one.

But when you come to verse one of chapter two, you are now in the month Nisan. So that four months have passed, four months in which Nehemiah has been telling God all about his burden, four months in which Nehemiah has been praying to God, four months in which before God he's been trying to indicate that up yonder there's a need in Jerusalem and he wants to go. And every day so to speak God's saying no.

The next week God's saying no. The next month God's saying no. And for four months he kept it before God, waiting.

And then it happened. He didn't need to speak to the king, the king spoke to him. The initiative lies with God.

Now you might have a burden about something, just you be content to wait God's time. Now have you got that? You see, Nehemiah is up to date when it comes to his call. Oh yes.

You see, you take Moses. Moses was called at the burning bush, but that's supernatural. That's out of the ordinary.

Gideon was called by God, but an angel came and spoke to him. That's supernatural. That's out of the ordinary.

But not Nehemiah. Nehemiah sees a need, but he's in a job that he can't get out of and he'll need to wait for God to get him out of it. Quite up to date, isn't it? Now wherein lay his problem? He was the king's cup bearer.

That was the problem. Now, the king's cup bearer was the man who was responsible to take the cup of wine and give it to the king. Now you might think there wasn't very much in that, he was just a glorified butler.

But you're wrong. You see, very often in ancient days, if someone wanted to take the throne, they would try and get the cup bearer, bribe them to poison the wine. So that when Nehemiah went to the king, he had the king's life in his hand.

This job was only held by a man who was utterly 100% trustworthy. Everything depended on him. It was a job that would be very difficult to get.

It would be just as difficult to get out of. That's why when the king drew attention to the fact somehow that he seemed to look sad that Nehemiah was afraid. That indicated, is there something malevolent going on inside? So you can appreciate this.

You see, he couldn't go and, given his notice, he couldn't go and tell him, I'm quitting the job. Oh no, nothing like that. And so he waits on until one day as he stands before the king and the king asks him the question, he declares his exercise, verse 3. Tells him about the need yonder in Jerusalem.

In the hope that the king will send him. Now this is very important that you see this. That the king sending him to Nehemiah, that meant that God was sending him.

For if the king, if God worked on the king's heart to relieve him of the job and let him go, he would take that as an indication that God was sending him and he was right. God would use the king in that way. So that he told the king about the need.

And the king said to him, verse 4. Now watch this. For what dost thou make request? Now the time has come. Yes, the crunch.

For what dost thou make request? Now notice now the close of verse 4 and the opening of verse 5. So I prayed to the God of heaven and I said unto the king. Oh isn't that wonderful? You didn't think a person could be in two places at the one time? Eh? I prayed to the God of heaven. He's in the sanctuary.

I said to the king. He's in the presence of the king in the palace. Two places at one time in that split second.

Are you listening? In that split second when the king asked the question, he lifted his heart and winged his prayer to the throne. So I prayed to the God of heaven and immediately I said to the king. Now can you see this? He's absolutely depending on God for what he'll say.

And so in that split second when the king suddenly asked the question, he lifted his heart to God and God opened his mouth. I prayed to the God of heaven and I said to the king. That's a great thing.

Do you know anything about it? Now mark this. In any given situation, if you're going to utter what the scholars call these ejaculatory prayers of Nehemiah, some of them will last two verses, some one verse, some half a verse, some only a phrase. Suddenly in the midst of a difficult situation, he'll lift his heart to God and get on with the job.

That's it. But you see, to do that, the road must be clear to the throne. It means that always at any time the road's clear and you can speak direct.

Do you find at times that the way's blocked? You seem to have a difficulty getting through to God? Now this kind of thing demands that the road's ever clear right through to the throne. So I prayed to the God of heaven and I said to the king and he told him. Now the king's going to send him.

Will you take note of basic principles in the service of God, please? Verse six. It pleased the king to send me. Now that's God sending him out, using the king to send him where he wants to go.

Verse six. Scent of God. Got that? Scent of God.

Verse seven. He asked for, to be given safe convoy till he came unto Jerusalem. Let letters be given me that may convey me over to the other side.

Verse seven. Guaranteed safe conduct to the place of service. Verse eight.

A letter unto Asaph, the keeper of the king's forest, for all the supplies that he needed. Got that? Verse six. Scent of God.

Verse seven. Guaranteed safe conduct, safe journey. Verse eight.

Supplies assured. Eh? My, isn't that great? Tell me, what more would any person want in serving God? One, to be sent of God. Second, to be guaranteed safe conduct and preservation.

Third, to have all their supplies assured. Eh? I wonder how many today would be abroad if they had the faith to believe that the God that sends them could supply their need. But there's no use of going out if you haven't got the faith in the God that you're saying is sending you.

So that, so we come now to these basic things. Now I want you to note something carefully. I want you to note that the need alone does not constitute the call.

Is that clear? The need alone doesn't constitute the call. There's a need in Jerusalem. This man can hardly get to it till the time that God sends him.

You've heard of need today. Countries crying out for men to come. Are you going? Come on, are you going? Well, you say, to be honest, I'm not.

Why not? Well, you say, I don't feel that God, at the moment, that God wants me to go. Good. The need still exists, doesn't it? Oh yes.

Don't you see? The need alone doesn't constitute the call. This is the difficulty sometimes of appeals in missionary meetings. And people, a wee bit emotional, respond.

They hear about the need and they're away, not very long away to their back. For the need alone doesn't constitute the call. You'll need to be sent of God.

That's vital and that's essential. And that will mean sacrifice, sent of God. Now that's right.

Now listen to me. Said the Lord one day to his disciples, as the Father has sent me, even so send I you. Listen again.

Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel, lo, I am with you always. What's that? Sent of God. It's the greatest thing in the world.

Now listen to me, please. Now let me adjust the thing a little. You see, you can understand this, can't you? That you can be in Vancouver as sent of God.

It doesn't necessarily apply to missionaries and full-time servants. There's many a person sent of God in their own particular sphere, doing a work for God. That's right.

We have one weakness, please, that I can see. The weakness is this, that everybody wants to take part in the ongoing thing. Nobody wants to strike out and lay another foundation.

Isn't that right? You've found that in West Richmond, haven't you? Hmm? They flock to West, now please, no criticism here at all. They come to West Richmond. It's an ongoing thing.

They all want to be in it. But there was a day when somebody had to lay the foundation. And there are far too many folks wanting to take advantage of a work that was laid and sacrifices made in early days, without any desire to lay another foundation.

The work must expand, it must go on. There must be a desire. We've heard about, was it Squamish, this young fellow was praying for down here.

You see, a testimony in weakness. But who's prepared to go up? Maybe sacrifice quite a lot. Maybe even with your job, sacrifice a few hundred dollars a year to do something for God.

If God wants you to go, sent of God. Now notice, Nehemiah ultimately met a thousand difficulties and never once did he offer to resign and give up. Is that right? Never once.

Listen to me. He went possibly for a short time and stayed 12 years. Again, you take the 12 disciples as they stood there, the world lying in darkness and in the shadow of death.

Go! Lo, I am with you always. They went out to suffer and ultimately most of them died as martyrs. They were hounded, persecuted, stoned a lot.

Never once did they offer to resign. Why? Now don't you miss this. Why? Because they were sent by Christ, sent by God.

Listen carefully now. Your inspiration for service is never in front of you, it's always behind you. Have you got that? Your inspiration for service is never in front of you, it's always behind you.

If you're in it to get all the plaudits and the claps on the back and be popular, you'll give it up in no time at all. Your inspiration lies behind you. To have heard the Christ say, Go! Ever and anon, when the difficulties come, you go back to the person you were sent from.

There'll be a lot fewer resignations in the work of God. If everybody recognized, if God has put you there, you stay there. Sent of God, your inspiration is never in front of you, it's always behind you.

There's a man who serves God in Japan called Leonard Mullin. He's from Ireland, possibly as you know. He lived in a little village on the Antrim coast, on the northeast of the island.

He lived in a little village called Carnloch, C-A-R-N-L-O-U-G-H, Carnloch. Lovely little village that he had learned to love. And in the passage of time, he heard the call to Japan.

And he found it tensionous to loyalties. And you can, in Vancouver, if you like, he wrote this, Japan or Carnloch? Oh, which shall it be? Inviting voices now are calling me. Where shall I turn the lamp of life to burn? Where shall I live the light of life to give? Japan, where many pearls be, or peaceful Carnloch by the sea? But Carnloch, tis to thee that I belong.

The sentiments that tug my heart are strong, place of my birth. What other place on earth my heart can touch or stir my thoughts so much? The scene of my nativity. I love thee, Carnloch by the sea.

Yes, Carnloch was the place I always meant to settle down and live with heart content. But God has changed the plans I had arranged. And is Japan my goal in God's great plan, where I should preach salvation free instead of Carnloch by the sea? My God, thy will be done.

Thy way is best. I'll go where thou dost send me, east or west. I'll take the word to those who never heard and spread the fame of Jesus' saving name, that they may rise and come to thee while Carnloch lingers by the sea.

Have you got it? Wherever it may be, if you feel that God would have you go, then go. How often we sing, where he sends, I will go. Will you? Quite sure? Letters to guarantee safe conduct.

We find here that the king gave him soldiers to take him safely across. He went to Ezra chapter 8 on a similar journey. Ezra refused the soldiers.

Now don't you go criticising them. They were both right. According to your faith, be it unto you.

Guaranteed safe conduct. How true. Now listen to me.

I know it's hackneyed. Keep yourself in the centre of the will of God and you're immortal until your work is done. There's no power in earth or hell can touch you.

Oh, now you'll be attacked. Ain't mine, as I said before, to tell you stories. I can remember at least four occasions being miraculously preserved to come to the conclusion that God had still further work for me to do.

Now think of it. God could have taken you home any day last week and he didn't. He took plenty of other Christians home, but not you.

That would indicate that there's something for you to do. And ever and anon there have been men that have hazarded their lives for Christ. Acts 15 verse 26.

Ever and anon there have been men that jeopardized their lives. Judges 4. And Christ is looking for people, young men and young women especially, who will dedicate life and talent and all that they've got to his service. Finally in this, supplies assured.

Eh? All that you want. All that you need. You see, the God that sends you is the God that will supply you.

Never and anon you'll look and all that you need will come. God help any servant that's looking solely to the brethren or anybody else for support. While God would usually do it through his people.

We are not the servants of the assemblies. We are not the servants of the brethren. We are the servants of God.

And we're looking directly to God to support what's of himself. Supplies assured, but that's true spiritually as well as physically. Isn't that right? You take your wee Sunday school class.

You've maybe been preaching five, seven, ten years. You never thought you could have done it Sunday after Sunday. Isn't that right? You've maybe been superintendent for 20, 30, 40 years.

You can hardly believe the time is passing. So it is ever and anon that supplies are assured from the risen Lord. Year after year, time after time, men will come from the presence of God, carrying the word of God, the gospel of God, the truth of God, declaring it in all its fullness and beauty, in all its wonder and splendor, in all its majesty and force, sustained by the risen Lord in glory, supplies assured to the end of the road.

Wonderful, isn't it? Everything in sovereign control. Finally, please, and I'll need to finish now. Will you notice that the first form of opposition appears in verse 10? Winston Ballot, the Horonite, and Tobiah, the servant, the Ammonite, heard of it.

It grieved them exceedingly that there was come a man to seek the welfare of the children of Israel. Isn't that amazing? It grieved them. It irritated them.

There was come a man to seek the welfare of the children of Israel. Listen, thousands of Jews in Jerusalem didn't upset the enemy, but this man did. Why? A man consecrated to God, a man dedicated to his service, a man with no axe to grind, no vain ambitions, a man utterly selfless.

He has come to do a work for God, and in doing that, he arouses the opposition of the enemy. Do you know anything about it? Anything of this opposition? Listen, come with me in your mind to Acts 19. And Paul is performing miracles in the name of Jesus Christ.

There are seven Jews there, exorcists. They go along trying to imitate Paul. They go along to a man with an unclean spirit, and they said to him, I adjure you, in the name of Jesus that Paul preaches, come out.

And to their utter astonishment, the evil spirit answered. And the evil spirit said to them, Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are you? Unknown in the gates of hell. Can I just give that a turn? Because I know these were enemies.

Can I give it a turn to you and say to you tonight, tell me please, in God's name, are you known or unknown in the gates of hell? I believe that there are men today that as soon as they get on their knees or on their feet, the whole of hell is alerted. They cause consternation in the kingdom of darkness. They cause the devil to work overtime.

The whole of hell is upset as they bow the knee or stand up to declare the truth of God. That's it. Would you ever upset the devil? Would you ever cause hell a few moments of distress? Are you coasting along as easy as you can and the devil can let you alone? You're making all sorts of excuses.

Known or unknown in the gates of hell. I tell you, there are men today that are known in heaven and are known in hell. There are men today that the devil and the demons fear because they carry the power of God, the wonder of Christ living in them fully and adequately.

Brethren and sisters, may God bless you. May God help you. In every one of you, may God raise a burden and an exercise.

You might never leave the confines of the city, but you'll be doing what God wants you to do. And I would say this to you, be what God has made you. Now don't try to be anyone else.

Be what God has made you. Stay where God has put you. And then, if need be, go where God would send you.

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