

Bristol Conference 1975-09 Nehemiah - His Problem

by Stan Ford

The sermon emphasizes the importance of proclaiming the gospel and building walls of salvation, security, and strength in our lives and in the church.

Duration: 33:17

Scripture: Deuteronomy 12:11, Nehemiah 2:17, Nehemiah 6:15, Psalm 9:10, Isaiah 26:8, Matthew 16:18, Revelation 21:27

Topics: "Christian Living", "Gospel Truth"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the character of Nehemiah and his problem. Nehemiah is described as a concerned, charitable, cheerful, and courageous man. The speaker suggests that Nehemiah's problem is reflective of the problem faced by Christians today in their efforts to build for Christ. The speaker emphasizes the importance of proclaiming the gospel truth and the power of the gospel to bring hope and rescue sinners. The sermon also highlights the significance of having walls of salvation, security, and strength in our fellowship with God.

Transcript

that Hanani, one of my brethren, came here and threatened men of Judah, and I asked them concerning the Jews that had escaped, which were left of the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem. And they said unto me, the remnants 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, and said, I beseech thee, O Lord God of heaven, the great and terrible God, the chief of covenant and mercy for them that love him, and observe his commandment. Let thine ear now be attentive, and thine eyes open, that thou mayest hear the prayer of thy servant, which I pray before thee now, day and night, for the children of Israel, thy servant, and confess the sins of the children of Israel, which we have sinned against thee, but I and my father's house have sinned. We have dealt very corruptly against thee, and have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the judgments, which thou commandest thy servant Moses.

Remember, I beseech thee, the word that thou commandest thy servant Moses, saying, If ye transgress, I will scatter you aboard among the nations. But if ye turn unto me, and keep my commandments unto

them, though there were of you cast out unto the uppermost parts of the heaven, yet will I gather them from thence, and I will bring them unto the place that I have chosen to set my name there. Now these are thy servants, and thy people, whom thou hast redeemed by thy great power, and by thy strong hand.

O Lord, I beseech thee, let now thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servants, and to the prayer of thy servants, who desire to hear thy name. And prosper, I pray thee, thy servants this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man. For I was the king of Cap-Lera.

The Lord will add his blessing, I am sure, to the reading of his own precious word. Those of you that were with us last evening will remember that we commenced our study in the book of Nehemiah by considering Nehemiah as to his purpose. And you will remember that I reminded you that he was a capable man, the king of Cap-Lera.

I reminded you that he was a concerned man. He wept, and fasted, and prayed. I reminded you that he was a charitable man as we looked on into chapters that yet will come, and we saw how he ministered to the needs of those that were hungry.

We saw how he was a cheerful man. For when we thought of the first verse of the second chapter, we remembered that here was a man who had not been powerful before time in the king's presence. And then, of course, we saw him as a courageous man.

But if last night we saw something of his purpose, tonight we're going to see something of his problem. And I dare suggest to you that as we see the problem that this man faced, so each one of us can see in it, reflected in it, something of the problem that every one of us who love the Lord and are seeking to build for Christ in our day and generation see as we look around in the times from which we come. For the problem of Nehemiah is the problem, surely, of our day.

You see, it seems to me that while we may refer to Jerusalem and its walls being reduced to a heap of rubble, while by faith we may gain upon faith that it's powered with fire, yet as we change that plan, so also we can see something of the church of God. May I remind you again of the words of Paul when he wrote to the church at Rome, these things will return a poor time for our, for our learning. Would I be right in saying that what was said of Jerusalem can be said of the church and of the church alone? For you will remember that we read together in verse 10 that here were a people who were redeemed, who were redeemed by thy great power and thy strong hand.

And would it not also be correct to say that the people of God are a folk who have been redeemed, but they are a folk who have been received? For if I go back one verse into verse 9, I remember the Lord said this of his earthly people that he would bring them unto the place that he had chosen to set his name there. Isn't that wonderful? You know, I always feel like shouting amen. I know you don't, but I feel very much like shouting it.

You see, this is the very mark, is it not, of a Christian church. It consists of those that have been redeemed. It consists of those who have been received.

Now I wonder tonight, am I speaking for someone who are not members of the Christian church? Oh no, please. I am not speaking of those whose name have been placed on a church wall. I am talking of those whose names have been written in the Lamb's book of life.

May I please, may I use that foolish old story that some of you have heard me use? May I? You know, the story is told of a man who used to read the newspaper the same way as Mary reads it. She always searched the same way, births, deaths, and marriages, you know. And one day he was reading through the births, deaths, and marriages column, and he saw, oh a little boy, very nice.

Or a little girl, almost as good. Or married, or about time too. You know the sort of remarks you pass about folks who you know.

And as he read down the birth and the marriage, he came to the death column. And his eyes almost popped from his head as he read, we regret to announce the death of, and there was his name, Subliat, and there was his address, but he wasn't dead. As he went to buy another newspaper, thinking there'd been a printer's error, we regret to announce the death of Subliat, and there was his name and address.

Down to the newspaper office he went. Marched through the swing doors, banged on the desk, I want to see someone. And eventually, from higher somewhere, there came the assistant editor, who had been warned of what had happened.

Sir, we're very sorry. We're not sure how it happened. We printed it in good faith, but you go away sir, don't you worry, we'll put it right.

You'll put it right? What will you do? We'll put your name in the birth column of our morning. I say, I say, isn't it true that he wrote our name in the death column? Dead in trespasses and sins. Isn't it true that when we trusted Jesus Christ, he wrote our name in the Lamb's book of life, in the birth column of heaven, redeemed? I'm not asking you, is your name written on a church register? I'm asking you, is your name written in heaven? Is your name written there, in the Lamb's bright and fair, in the book of the Savior? Is your name written there? Oh, here were people who were redeemed, and they were redeemed indeed by his great power and his strong hand.

Oh, blessed be his name. But of those of us who trust him, we can say we've been redeemed by his precious blood. Oh, what power is found in the blood of Christ.

Have you been to Jesus for the cleansing power? Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb? Am I talking to someone here tonight and you're not saved? God forgive you if you have never trusted his son. May I please remind you, you were taught in Sunday school, were you not? But there are three Greek words that are translated with our word redeemed. Each one of them is stronger than the one before.

There is a Greek word which means that a price has been paid, and we have been partially redeemed. There is another Greek word which is a stronger word. It is not only that a person has been purchased, but they have been purchased and taken out of the market, never to be put up for sale again.

But there is another word, a word stronger than the first two, not that we are purchased, not that we are purchased and taken out of the market, but purchased and set free, redeemed. No wonder you sing redeemed, how I love to proclaim it, redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. Are you a member of that mystical body of Christ? The church, they were redeemed.

But then will you notice they were not only redeemed, they were received. He said, the blessed God of heaven, I will bring them unto the place where I chose to set my name there. Isn't it grand when you're brought into the mystical body of Christ, you're in the church, but isn't it grand when you're brought to a place that he has chosen to set his name there? You know, it's not everyone that's in the mystical body of

Christ that's in the place where he's chosen to set his name.

My Bible says, God loveth his name. My Bible dares to tell me, and they that know his name will put their trust in him. And when I think of the name of my Lord, and I remember the great promises that he made, the prophecies, the predicaments he made concerning the church, then my heart is strangely moved.

In that first mention of the church in the gospels, in the 18th verse of the 16th of Matthew, the Lord Jesus has asked his disciples, Whom do they say that I am? And when they told him, then he asked them, but whom do you say that I am? And what an answer came from the lips of Peter, Lord the Christ, the Son of the living God. The Lord looked at him in the face, that his heart speak even more then. He dared to say that flesh and blood had not revealed that to Peter, but his Father that was in heaven.

And then he said this, and then he said this, and thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against me. Now every one of you know that he was making a play on two Greek words. Jesus was not saying, you're Peter, and I'm going to build the church on you.

He looked into the face of Peter, and he dared say to him, Peter, Peter, thou art Petra, thou art Petra. Not our English word, Peter, thou art Petra, and Petra simply means, a piece of rock. And he looked at him and said, thou art a piece of rock, but upon this, not piece of rock, not Petra, but upon, not Petra, but upon Petra, a mass of rock.

Thou art a piece of rock, but upon this mass of rock, I'll build my church. And the mass of rock was Peter's concession that Jesus was the Christ. He dared to say, here's a name, here's a title, Jesus the Christ.

And on that mass of rock, I'll build my church. What was it Peter said when he wrote to the church at Cohen? Another foundation can no man lay, than that which was laid, not Peter, but Christ Jesus. All my fellow travellers to eternity, let's remember that by new birth we come into the church of God, the mystical body of Christ, that he wants us to come to a place where his name is acknowledged, and where that church is built on him and around him.

He goes on in that 18th chapter of Matthew and the 20th verse to remind us that where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them. Oh, there is a name to which we gather, a place that he has chosen to set his name. Oh friends, as you gathered this morning, this conference, you did not gather around that table, did you? You did not gather around that bread or that cup, you gathered around the person, Jesus Christ the Lord.

We were a few miles away and Marion jumped remembering the Lord with a few saints that are there, but I'll let you into a secret. I didn't gather to the gospel chapel in Marion, not me. I wouldn't have travelled that distance to do that, but I went there to gather to his name, to his name.

I don't want to take any other name. You may say to me, Mr. Preacher, what are you? And I'll tell you what I am. I'm a sinner save the great.

That's all I am. That's all I am. I often get asked, what Mr. Fordyce? Well, they never know how to put it, do they? Well, let me tell you what I'm not.

I'm not a Baptist, though I believe in baptism. I'm not a Methodist, though I believe in Method. I'm not Church of England, although I'm a member of the church in England.

I'm not Catholic, although I believe that the church is a Catholic thing, universal. I'm not Congregational, although I believe in congregation. By the grace of God, I want that one name.

And please, I want the name that any other Christian can take. You can call me a brother if you will, as long as you don't call me a sister. You can call me a brother.

You can call me a Christian. You can call me any name the Bible gives to all Christians, and I'll accept that name. But don't you call me Dr. and don't you dare call me Reverend.

Ah, I only know this, that we gathered to his name. And this is what they did. I say, these folks who went to start again the city of Jerusalem, they were redeemed.

They were received. But the tragedy was this, the walls were broken down. The walls were broken down.

The gates were charred with fire. Nehemiah wept as he heard what had happened. Ah, here was his problem.

Now, I wonder if I could make three suggestions to you. I wonder if I could suggest this to you, that those walls be parts of salvation. Now please, don't you come to me and tell me they don't.

Because all I'll do to you is ask you to tell the Lord they don't. Because you see, my Bible says this Isaiah 16 and 18, thou shalt call thy walls salvation and thy gates praise. So, amen or take it.

You know that was us. And he said our walls are salvation and our gates are praise. The second thing I'm going to remind you, that those walls not only speak of salvation, but those walls speak of security.

They talk of that which keeps the enemy out. We'll see in a moment how there were those who thought to overthrow them and overthrow God's people. And the walls built that the enemy might be kept out.

But those walls not only tell the story of salvation, those walls not only tell the story of security, but those walls tell the story of strength. They tell us in words better pitted than any words I can find, that it is possible to know the very strength of God around our fellowship. I wonder if I may ask you please, around your fellowship, around the fellowship that you are in fellowship with, his fellowship, tell me, are there walls of salvation? Are there walls of security? Are there walls of strength near my request? Because those walls have been knocked down.

The walls of salvation. Now please, I know this is not a gospel service, but never let us forget that my Bible, your Bible says that the walls of salvation. Now if I was to ask you, what comes with God's salvation? What would you say? Would I be right? Would you say amen to this? That in God's salvation we have first, pardon for the delinquents.

We have second, payment for the debtor. We have third, purity for the defiled. We have fourth, pleasure for the depressed.

Oh amen. And would you not agree with me that we have promise for the defeated. Now don't come to me and say to me Mr. Preacher, there's much more than that in God's salvation.

Because all I do is look at you and say that's true. But brother Jim only gave me 40 minutes. Listen, as you read the book of Nehemiah, is it not a fact that these things that are found in salvation were not being found in Jerusalem because the walls were not jammed? I said the first thing that comes is pardon for the

delinquent.

And yet verse 7 says, we have dealt very corruptly against thee. Here were a people who knew not the forgiveness and the mercy of God. They had dealt very corruptly with the Lord and there were no walls around the city.

And for their delinquency, there was no harm. I said that salvation brings payment for the debtor. And you go and read chapter 5 and you will find there were those who were prepared indeed to share all they had.

They said they mortgaged their lands, they mortgaged their houses. They were there a people who went into debt. They went into debt that they might live.

And then their own children had to be taken into bondage because of their debt. There was no answer to their debt. And I'll tell you why there was no answer to their debt.

Because the walls had been knocked down. I said that salvation brings purity for the defiled. Then may I remind you that there were three men, we'll have a lot to say about them in the course of the week.

There were three men who were the enemies of God's people, but one of them was Tobiah. And Tobiah, the Bible tells you, Tommy, was an Ammonite. He was a man who speaks of the flesh in all its corruption.

As a matter of fact, he got married to one of the daughters of the high priest. And do you know what that old rascal of a high priest did to him? He took him into the very house of God and lodged him in the house of God. And we'll see at the end how old Nehemiah went in.

And he got hold of his household stuff. He threw it out. And the Bible doesn't tell me that I've got a feeling that after the household stuff, old Nehemiah went out.

I only know this, that Nehemiah was the man who in the 13th chapter said, if you do so again, I'll lay my hands on you. Did you know that was in the Bible? Oh, I let some of you young Christians into a secret. Don't you think it's an unmanly thing to serve Christ? It'll take every bit of backbone you ever have.

And there are some of you, all you've got is a piece of cotton with some knots in it. But he was a man who had some backbone. And I tell you this, Tobiah was a wretched man, a wretched man.

And there was no pure for the defiled because the gates had been burned with fire and the walls were not bad. I said, I said there was no, there was pleasure for the depressed in God's salvation. And there was no pleasure for those that were depressed there.

You go and read the third chapter and you will find not only the record of the buildings of the wall, but you will find this, you will find that there were those who were depressed, who never had that depression lifted. May I say the last thing? There is promise for the defeated. And when I read the 19th verse of the second chapter, I read again of those three men, sends out Tobiah and Deshaun.

When I read this of these men, they lost Nehemiah and the people of God, they left them to scorn. They left them to scorn. They looked upon them as a defeated people.

And I'll tell you why they looked upon them as a defeated people, because the walls were not bad. They didn't look upon them as a defeated people when the walls were built. Oh no, no, no, they were defeated then.

Brethren, sisters, may I say this, that if in our assembly there are no walls of salvation, if you and I do not proclaim the fact that neither is there salvation in any other, for there's none other name under heaven given among men where volume must be saved, if we don't proclaim that salvation, then our walls are damned. And the things that mark a Christian testimony will never mark ours. I believe that we are living in a day when there is a fresh call from heaven for a virile presentation of the gospel message.

I do not believe that the gospel message is being preached with all its power as it should be preached. Some of us half apologize. You know it becomes a vicious circle, brethren.

It does, you must forgive me, but it becomes a vicious circle. We look around Sunday night and we say, oh, not many unsaved in, we're minister of the word tonight, and the couple of unsaved that are there, they say, I'm not going back there, I couldn't understand it, and we defeat our purpose. I believe that the gospel should be presented, and I believe that when the walls of our salvation are down, then we will be a people not wondered at, but laughed at.

Let's proclaim the gospel truth, for if I've learned anything in a few years of Christian experience, I've learned this, that there's nothing in the world like the gospel to cheer the hearts of God's folk, and there's nothing in the world like gospel to rescue sinners from parody. And I'll let you into a secret. If you keep preaching the gospel, you'll soon find out that in that gospel you'll have as much ministry as when you stand up and say, I'm going to minister.

But would you notice something more? Not only were the walls of salvation, but the walls of security. Those walls that enabled folk within them to feel safe. I suppose the classic, the classic story in the Bible is, I beg your pardon, the classic story in the Bible is the story of the cities of refuge, isn't it? I say, what a story it is.

What a story it is. You will remember how God set up six cities of refuge, three on either side of the River Jordan, that if a man killed another unaware, he could flee into the city of refuge, and he could find his salvation. Those walls around the sea, they bespoke the fact that there was security.

Now at my hiding place, bless God, I have a city of refuge. And I believe the church should represent that city of refuge. I believe that in our local fellowship, there should be security, where folk come in and know of the truth, that the Word of God is being taught here, and we can accept that which is being said.

So let's not forget this, brethren. It's not everyone in our assembly that has a university degree. It's not everyone in the church of God who has the academic knowledge of others.

And while I have lived long enough to know that some who academically are so low can be so mighty in the Word of God, yet I also know that there are some, dear brethren and sisters, nothing wrong with them except they were born of it too. They were rather young when they were born. And because of that, they haven't had the education of some of you young folks.

They haven't had the chance of some of you young folks. And if those men and women who find it sometimes difficult to read, if they can't come into an assembly to have confidence that what is being taught is the Word of God, then there's no real security in their hearts. But when the walls are up, hallelujah, there's security.

Thank God there is. And I bless God for the security that's had. Why, when the Arabians and the Ammonites and the Ashdodites conspired, all of them together to come and fight against Jerusalem, says

chapter four and eight, they found something was happening.

The walls had not yet been completed, but they were almost completed. And when the enemy comes against us and the walls are up, hallelujah, there's safety for God. Brethren and sisters, let's build the walls.

Let's make sure that the Word of God is the foundation of our paths. And I must hurry. I suggested that the walls speak not only of salvation and security, but they speak of strength.

Was it not one of the great presidents of Yale University, who about a hundred years ago, I think, please, I wasn't alive then, you see, but I think it was about a hundred years ago, he wrote those classic words, I love thy church, O God, her walls before thee stand dear as the apple of thine eye, and graven in thine hand. Oh, if that be true, and that is the truth of Scripture, then dare I suggest, brethren, that those walls

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