

# Recovery - Part 4 of 4

by T. Austin-Sparks

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of the presence of God in the church and in individual lives, and highlights the significance of the tabernacle of David and the prophecy of Amos in understanding God's purpose and plan.*

**Duration:** 46:34

**Scripture:** Acts 15:12

**Topics:** "Recovery"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the book of Nehemiah and its relevance to our lives today. He highlights how, after God's message was conveyed to the people, the enemy tried to infiltrate the church with worldly principles and personal agendas. The speaker emphasizes the need for diligence and watchfulness, so that we do not allow anything that is not of the Lord to enter our lives. He also points out the importance of the word of God, which was recovered and became the governing authority for the people in Nehemiah's time. The speaker mentions the appointment of interpreters to help the people understand their own language after years of captivity.

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## Transcript

In the meetings of this conference, we have been occupied with God's message for our time, as conveyed to us through the book which goes by the title of Nehemiah. This evening, in as concise a way as we can, we shall seek to gather up the message and its lines as we have been looking at. I want to turn you over to the New Testament to read some verses from the book of the Acts.

The book of the Acts, chapter 15, verses 12 to 18. Acts 15, 12 to 18. And all the multitude kept silence.

And they hearkened unto Barnabas and Saul, rehearsing what signs and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them. And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Brethren, hearken unto me. Simeon hath rehearsed how God did first visit the Gentiles to take out of them a people for his name.

And to this agree the words of the prophets, as it is written, After these things I will return, and I will build again the tabernacle of David which is fallen, and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up, that the residue of men may seek after the Lord. And all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who maketh these things known from the beginning of the world. There is a marginal alternative, as

you notice, to that last clause, who doeth these things which were known from the beginning of the world.

That paragraph, which we have just read, is the New Testament counterpart of the book of Nehemiah. As you see, it refers to the tabernacle of David, its fall and its rebuilding. And the quotation, as you will also see, is from the prophet Amos.

Now the prophet Amos prophesied when that tabernacle or temple of David was about to be destroyed, on its way to fall. He was a prophet of judgment, judgment upon the sin of the people of God. And that judgment was going to culminate in the destruction or the fall of David's great temple, representative of David and his people, their overthrow and the captivity.

And with that imminent Amos prophesied that there would be an afterward, and the Lord would return and build again the tabernacle of David which was fallen, the residue of men upon whom his name was called. Here we have that prophecy quoted and cited in the book of the Acts by an apostle. It is full of significance and impressiveness to note how the apostles interpreted the prophecy of Amos.

David's tabernacle or temple did fall. We know that. The book of Nehemiah sees it in ruins with the city and the city wall.

It has happened. But a remnant has returned from that judgment captivity and is here in Nehemiah with the companion book Ezra, found rebuilding the temple. And these two books contain the story of the building again.

And the apostles were not at all satisfied that that was what Amos fully meant. They saw in that no exhausting of the prophecy of Amos, only perhaps a very poor and partial fulfillment for a time. The apostles saw that there was a very much fuller and larger fulfillment than that which took place in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah.

And their interpretation of the prophecy of Amos is here in the book of the Acts. To find the prophecy of Amos on the way to its fullest fulfillment, you have to read this book. It's here.

I repeat, these words are the New Testament counterpart of what we have in the book of Acts itself. Is that. Is that.

We ought to be impressed and duly impressed with this fact to begin with. The apostles seeing, as they did see, that prophecy, the Old Testament, was certainly not all that God had in mind when he inspired the prophet to utter it. God had something very much bigger than that in his mind.

No one did see until the Holy Spirit came and took hold of these apostles and gave them the fuller meaning of the prophetic. Now, to survey, gather up the various features and factors in this revelation, the presentation of truth, there are several particulars. Firstly, there is what the tabernacle or the temple represent.

And that comes out so clearly in the New Testament. And it's really the heart, and more than the heart, it's the whole sphere of what we have in the New Testament. And Christ answers to that in fullness as himself the sanctuary of God.

He had used that very word of himself, destroy this sanctuary. And in three days, I will raise it up again. Tremendously impressive statement.

This spake he of his body. And we know without fresh study of the truth of the New Testament that Christ himself answers to that whole, vast, vast thought of God to have a dwelling place amongst men. That is realized in the first instance in a perfect way in God's own Son, Emmanuel, God with us.

God tabernacled in Christ. God was in Christ Jesus. In Christ, says the apostle.

God was in Christ. God, who looked upon him, was able to find in him that of which he had once been disappointed when he made the world, when he created all things. And when he made man and finished his work, he looked on all his work and said, It is very good.

And God walked in the garden. God took pleasure in dwelling there with man. It was the beginning of the answer to a great thought and desire in the heart of God concerning his creation.

And then he was robbed of it. Man let in that which was contrary to God, and God had to withdraw. But in his Son, he found the recovery and restoration of that which had fallen.

That sanctuary which had fallen. We speak of the fall. It was that.

It was fallen down. And it was ruined. It was laid waste, and God had to withdraw.

After the long centuries of many representations and types, his own Son came. His new creation. His full thought.

And looking on him, he could say, My beloved, in whom I am well pleased. In whom I am. I believe that carries more than being pleased with him.

I believe it implies in whom I am well pleased to dwell. Satisfied here is that which gives me a resting place. My beloved, in whom I am well pleased.

It is very good. He answered the eternal desire and thought of God. He is.

The sanctuary recovered which had fallen down. It is Christ. That is what comes out in the New Testament.

You want to know where God is? Or you want to know where to find God? Not only in Christ, but truly in Christ. But then there is the extension of that. But let us see that that is what the apostles saw.

Oh, wonderful thing that they came to see that. After all the mystery and all the misapprehension. All the failure to see while he in flesh was with them.

Last they saw and they saw him as glorified. The counterpart in spiritual reality of David's temple which when it was complete. Very magnificent.

Very beautiful. Perfect as a type. And the Lord filled it with his glory.

Just filled it with his glory. So here on the day of Pentecost Christ is in glory. Christ is in heaven filled with glory.

And out from him the sanctuary in heaven filled with glory. The glory shone and proceeded to take up its residence in that extension of Christ. For by the Holy Spirit Christ is extended.

He comes to dwell in believers, in born again believers. And as he remains one, never divided into so many, remaining one. He constitutes them with himself.

The dwelling place of God. The day of Pentecost sees that extension. God coming to occupy the larger realm known to us as the church.

There was something at that time which bore all the marks of God's good pleasure. The men and the women were not perfect in themselves but there was something so much of Christ there that God is smiling upon it. God is well pleased to be there.

The whole scene at the beginning of that book is one of God being able to say I am well pleased. God finding his home and his rest and his satisfaction. That is what the apostles saw as the fuller fulfillment of the prophecy.

I will build again that which is fallen. The tabernacle of David. Christ, God's sanctuary and then extended to a chosen people taken out of the nations for his name.

Who also become known as his temple and his holy city. His dwelling place. That is where we begin with the book of Nehemiah and Ezra.

That is where we begin with the book of the Acts. Being as now transferred from the earth to heaven. That may be one amongst other reasons why the Lord did not let them stay permanently in the earthly Jerusalem.

Very effective way the Lord saying here we have no continuing city we seek one to come. Our city is not of this earth at all. So he allowed the earthly Jerusalem to be a scattering place for the church.

Because now the Jerusalem is in heaven and not on earth. And perhaps they were inclined again to make it an earthly thing. The Lord said no, not at all.

My city, my Jerusalem, my temple is not down here it is in heaven. It is my son. They came to see that.

Then in this Old Testament book we proceed to the wall. The wall which was particularly Nehemiah's work of reconstruction. The wall as representing the landmark.

The landmark between Christ and his church. And that which is of the wall apart and outside and contrary. We said so much about it but it cannot be too strongly emphasized and stressed dear friends.

That there is that very secret demarcation to overlook or override which is once again to spiritually nullify all that God intends as to his dwelling. Cannot break down that wall without breaking down the real house of God. The wall will lead to the temple and breaking down will be thorough once the wall is broken down.

God will not be found there if the wall is destroyed. And it does really represent that great spiritual truth that Christ and his people are a separated people from this world. Great, great work of all the enemies as with Nehemiah's enemies so with the enemies of Christ and his church is always to remove that landmark.

That distinguishing factor and to override and bring in what is the world. It's been like that all through the centuries and more so today perhaps than ever. In many ways religiously as well as secularly to bring the spirit of the world in.

The methods of the world, the principles of the world. Something of this world which lies in the wicked one into the sacred ground and area of what is God and Christ alone. Do it and you will find God has gone, God has gone, God has withdrawn as truly as it was literally the case in the Old Testament.

So it will be in the spiritual of the New Testament era. There can be no preserving, may I put it like this, of the presence of God If we let that world under the evil one come in any shape or form. That wall must be maintained intact.

That demarcation must be preserved unsullied. That landmark must remain strong and unbroken. Let us lay this to heart.

The most vital thing where you and I are concerned and where any company of the Lord's people is concerned and where the whole church is concerned. The most vital issue is the presence of God. It is the presence of God.

It is not a hundred and one things that go to make up Christianity. Ultimately and supremely it is the presence of God. The presence of God in you, in me, in all of us.

That we meet the Lord in one another and others meet the Lord in us by our presence here on this earth. The Lord has a way of satisfying himself, his desire and showing himself and what he is like. That is the vocation of the church.

That is the vocation of the believer. Let us take this to heart. Concentrate upon this.

For this is where the spirit of God comes in, the presence of God. Oh let us be diligent and devoted about this thing. Of course we know, we do know, if we lose the Lord's presence or the sense of the Lord's presence everything is hollow and empty.

Isn't that true? It is a hollow shell. The old tabernacle in Shiloh might still remain as a structure but when the Lord is gone it is a hollow shell. And so in any life where the Lord has to stand back or in any assembly where he is outside the door or in his church where he cannot commit himself it is a hollow thing.

Life is hollow without the Lord. It does matter, we know that very well, that all that we realize that the great thing that is to justify our existence is that the Lord shall more and more be known and met in us and where we are. I would take that as the very heart of this conference.

For individuals and for companies and for as many of the Lord's people who could hear it and receive it. Well at the beginning of the book of the Acts it was like that. There was no doubt whatsoever that the Lord was in his holy temple.

The Lord was there. But, but, on the one side it was because the Holy Spirit had made that so distinct mark of difference between that people and the world. On the other side notice how no sooner did God have that pleasure and that satisfaction than the old enemy started up his old tricks.

Ananas and Sapphira, instruments inspired of Satan to let the world commercial principle into the church. Again and again it was like that. Some impingement upon what was of God for personal ends, for earthly and worldly ends.

One man seeking gifts by the laying on of hands that he might be able to do something and the apostle says thou hast no part nor lot in this. Thy heart is not right with God. No place for you in this.

But you see the enemy is busy, busy again trying to find some, some crack, some crevice, some place through which he can force himself and his evil system into the area defined for God alone. You and I, like Nehemiah, must be very, very diligent and watchful to see that the Lord does not have to stand back because we've let something in that is not of the Lord. Well that's the next thing, the wall.

Then something that we have not said much about as to this book of Nehemiah. We only mentioned it yesterday in an analysis. The place of the word of God.

Place of the word of God. If you look again you will see that there was a phase or there was a point at which the word of God was restored to its place of full authority. They searched for the word of God.

They brought it in and they made it the governing thing for their life in all departments. The authority, the absolute authority of the word of God. Perhaps little need be said about that.

I'm not simply talking fundamentalism about the inspiration of the scriptures and that sort of thing. There's something very much more than that. I suppose most of us believe that the Bible is the word of God and that the Bible ought to govern the life of the Christian.

But that means very much more than a general statement or belief. This word of God has hidden in it, buried in it the pattern for God's purpose. Christ is there as the model in every respect of God's sanctuary.

He's hidden in all the scriptures. He's there. That is the word of God.

It is not the letter. It is what lies behind the letter, what the spirit has put into the letter. And that is Christ.

That is Christ. He is the pattern. Your approach to the word of God, to the Bible, dear friends, must always be with one question in mind.

What has this to say to me about Christ? What is there here that can teach me more of Christ? Both positively and to the contrary. One side, yes, and the other side, that is not Christ. The Bible is divided like that.

But the authority of the word of God is not just the authority of letters. It is the authority of the living word within the written word. And he is there.

He is the pattern. There in all the scriptures. And he is the absolute authority as the living word for the church, for the people of God.

That is a statement of truth. And it must be applied. There's nothing superior to the scriptures.

There's no revelation superior to the scriptures. Make no mistake about it. There is nothing of revelation from God that is superior to the scriptures.

That puts the Bible on one side in any fragment at all. If the Bible says something, that's what the Bible means. That's what it says.

That's what it says. And you are superior to that or you violate that to your own peril. And with the effect of putting you outside of that in which the Lord is fulfilling his purpose.

But enough about that for the moment. There's something more than that in this book of Nehemiah, which I think is very, very important and instructive. If you look at chapter 8 of this book, you will see that when

the word of God was recovered, brought back into its place, brought in to become the governing authority of the life of the people, it had to be interpreted.

You see, these people had been in captivity for 70 years and they had forgotten their own native tongue and learned a foreign language. And when they came back after 70 years, the new generation and the old people didn't understand their own language when it was spoken, their old native language. And so they were appointed some 13 interpreters in addition to the Levites.

That's enough for you to have one interpreter. But on that day or in those days of reading the scriptures, both the Levites and then 13 extra men stood amongst the people. And as the word of God was read, they gave the meaning and the sense.

They said, you hear that? Now that means this. That means this. And in that I see a wonderful spiritual principle.

Because I just see that happening in the book of the Acts. By reason of our alienation, our spiritual alienation, we don't understand heavenly language. It's difficult enough when we've been brought back to understand the things of the Spirit.

We are having to learn a new language all the time as a new generation. We are having to learn a new language all the time as a new generation, born again. But here in this book of the Acts is this wonderful thing.

These apostles who were the interpreters, filled with the Holy Spirit, taught by the Holy Spirit, governed by the Holy Spirit, were interpreting the Old Testament in a way that those most familiar with it did not understand. It's one of the impressive things, what they saw in the scriptures with which they were familiar. Here's an instance, Amos.

Well, the orthodox Hebrew would say of the prophecies of Amos, of course that referred to the remnant returning, and to Nehemiah, and Haggai, and that time when they rebuilt the temple. Of course, that is what Amos referred to. It's only common sense to see that Amos was talking about that, and that fulfilled the prophecy of Amos.

Now, here are Hebrews in Jerusalem, filled with the Holy Spirit, and they are seeing what no orthodox Jew saw in that prophecy, that it was not fulfilled in Nehemiah or his time. The fulfillment is in Christ, in our time. And if you look again and see the preaching of these apostles, it's just like that.

They are saying things about the scripture that no one without the revelation, illumination, and inspiration of the Holy Spirit would see in the scriptures. And in that way, they became vital. And so I take that up.

It's a very important thing, because we are in this dispensation of the spirit, and the spiritual, and the heavenly. Dear friends, I have said with great emphasis, there is nothing extra to the scriptures in themselves. But, oh, what a need there is for men filled with the spirit to interpret the Word of God according to the mind of God.

We've got any amount of man's interpretation and exposition, but how little we have of real Holy Spirit illumination of the Word of God. And the other doesn't get us very far, does it? But anything that really is a touch of the Living Spirit upon the Word, oh, how it helps. How it quickens, enlivens, and lifts, and enriches.

As we are able to say, oh, I never saw that. How wonderful that is. We need the interpreters who see God's meaning in the Word and through the Word.

We need this New Testament ministry. Pray that the Lord will recover this amongst other things in His recovering work in this time. As He brings back a people, as He brings back His sanctuary, as He brings back His wall of demarcation, pray that He will bring back spiritual interpreters of His mind, of His Word, to fulfill a ministry of real illumination and revelation to His church.

Pray that God will secure such men. We need them badly. We just don't need technical teachers and preachers.

We need interpreters by the Holy Spirit of the Word of God. We pass to two remaining things. We spent the whole afternoon on one of them.

The absolute government of the Holy Spirit. The Word of God and the government of the Holy Spirit. These are the two great governmental factors in the house of God, amongst the people of God.

And I'm not going to stay to say much more about this matter. But we must remember that all through that book of Nehemiah, there is a secret mighty energy at work. And that is the energy of the Holy Spirit carrying out the divine plan to its full realization.

And that is what we have here in this book of Acts. The Holy Spirit's got it in charge. He has taken charge of the divine purpose.

He Himself, by His own energy, might and wisdom, is carrying it out. Oh, what a romance of the Spirit that book is. How differently He does things from what men would do them.

What He does that men would never think of. You have to say, well, I would never have thought of that. You see the Spirit moving, how He does it, His strategy.

The Spirit is in charge. And there's a great need for this recovery too. I need not argue that.

You and I need the recovery of the absolute authority and government of the Holy Spirit in every respect. The local company needs that wherever it is. And the whole Church of God needs that.

Other lords have dominion. Other heads are in His position. Holy Spirit is not today able to exercise Himself because there are other forces at work which are not of Him.

We leave that. We must pray in all our praying for God's recovering work that this shall come back with His purpose. Finally, there is the matter of the local expression.

The last phase of this book of Nehemiah sees the people settled in the cities of the land. That which corresponds to that, of course, in the New Testament is the churches over the world, the local companies. What we have to say about that is that that is the outcome of something.

That is the outcome of Jerusalem being rebuilt. That is the outcome of there being an archetype, there being the model in existence from which all that is local and scattered can take its character. Now here you see there is that spiritual thing secured on the day of Pentecost.

Christ and His Church, His members, a model in those beginning, just a model. And then because that is in existence, it's there, the local churches take their character from that. They are but an extension of the full thought of God, a local expression of that which is there spiritually.

And dear friends, if all that I have been saying about the purpose and desire of God for dwelling place, about the character of that dwelling place, its nature, its spiritual and moral nature, about its separateness, its distinctiveness, its absolute separation from the world, the government of the Word of God, the government of the Holy Spirit, if all these things go to make up the whole purpose of God and are the features of what God Himself has secured in His Son, then in every locality where His people are there should be that in representation, an extension of that. Those things should be true where there are the Lord's people. It only requires two of you to be a representation, you know.

The Lord said that, I didn't. Wheresoever two or three in my name, I'm there. I am there.

That strikes a familiar note now. The Lord is there. It only takes two in Christ to be a microcosm of this whole wonderful thing that God is after.

You too in your home. Oh, you deplore perhaps that there are not others, there's not an assembly there, but there are two of you. The Lord can be there because He's in you too.

And your home can be a dwelling place because He's in you too, a dwelling place of God. And in that, all that I have said can have its expression. The Holy Spirit can be in government and authority.

The Word of God may be the rule of your life. All this providing the Lord with a place for Himself and His pleasure. And He can take pleasure in being there.

Let us remember that. If there are only two of us somewhere, that's the possibility of two, the Lord has said it. If there are three, so much the better.

And if there are more, better still. But the principle it is, the principle, not the multitude, but the principle, providing the Lord with that which makes it His pleasure to be there, a heart for the Lord, two hearts for the Lord, where the Lord alone is Lord. The Lord grant that out of this there may be inspired in our hearts such a purpose and such a meaning in life.

We shall say as one long ago said, as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. And if you want to know what serving the Lord means, it means giving to Him that upon which His heart is set. And this is it.

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