

As we **Wrap Up** the Book of **Nehemiah** today

the **single word** that comes to **MY MIND** – From the Entire Book of Nehemiah - is the word – **FAITHFULNESS**

I **really spent** some **time** yesterday asking God

What is the **Single Biggest Lesson**
I'm **taking away** from Nehemiah?

& I just **can't say it** any better than **J.I. Packer** did
in the **title of his commentary** on Nehemiah

He called it – **A PASSION FOR FAITHFULNESS**

& **that's Exactly** what I'm **taking away** from Nehemiah
A PASSION FOR FAITHFULNESS - IN SERVING GOD

& I **pray** you've **CAUGHT** that "**Passion For Faithfulness**"
as we've **gone thru** this book

Let's Pray

Alright – **Let's do** a Quick "**Book Review**"

From Nehemiah's **Passion** in prayer
for the people of God - WAY BACK in CH 1
To his "**Stepping Out**" to put the details in order
both to **get** to Jerusalem - & in **planning** the rebuilding
To his **Rallying** of the people to **Join God** in this great work
To his unending **Strength** in the Face of
constant Enemy **Ridicule** & **Attack**
To his **Strengthening** of the people when they got down
& **Correcting** them when they were committing wrongs
To his **handling** of the **Slander**, **Conspiracy**, & **Treachery**
continually **thrown** at him from the enemy
To the **Seeming Success**
of the Wall being finished in a Miraculous **52 days**
But then – to the **Re-Building** of the **True Wall of Testimony**
which was the **spiritual lives** of the people of God
Beginning with that **Great Revival** in Ch 8
Then the **celebrations** - & the **commitments** to God's Word
To **watching** the people make **VOWS** & **PROMISES** to God
& then **many thousands** of them **moving back** into Jerusalem
to help **rebuild** the inner city
& then the **Rejoicing** of the people as they **Dedicated** the Wall

What **incredible Faithfulness** it took for **Nehemiah**
to **Stay** at the **Task** - - to **Stay** the **Course** - *no matter what*

We saw Nehemiah's **PASSION FOR FAITHFULNESS** up to **CH 12**

But in **Ch 13** – his **Faithfulness** is put – to the **FULL TEST**

Because after **12 Yrs** of Nehemiah
faithfully serving God's people in **Jerusalem**

He left - & **returned** to his former position
with the king of **Babylon**

& then - - - **during his** relatively SHORT **absence**

The people slipped **RIGHT BACK** into
the very things **Nehemiah** had Faithfully led them **out of**

Which **reminds** us **SO MUCH** – of **MOSES**
& **so many** of the **Prophets** of Israel

In **Ch 10 the** people had made **Vows** to God
that **would have** changed their lives **forever**

But by **Ch 13** – Those **VOWS** had been **Forgotten**, or **Broken**

& the people were **quickly headed** right back to the **Godless state**
they were in **before** Nehemiah **first started** his work

& So - It is **NOT Ch 12** – at the **PEAK** of the **Celebration** & **Rejoicing**
that PROVES Nehemiah's **Faithfulness**

It's not the **Apparent Success** he had - in **Miraculously**
Rebuilding the Wall - **that PROVES his Faithfulness**

It's **HOW** he **RESPONDED**
when the **EVIDENCE** Pointed to **FAILURE . . .**

That **PROVES** Nehemiah's **Faithfulness**

It's HOW Nehemiah RESPONDED when it LOOKED LIKE
there been NO Lasting Spiritual CHANGE in the PEOPLE

That PROVED Nehemiah's Faithfulness

After returning to Jerusalem & seeing
MUCH of the Spiritual GOOD - already VANISHED

NOW – Would Nehemiah continue to BE FAITHFUL
to DO what God had called him to do - TO THE END ??

WITHOUT consideration of some MEASUREMENT of Success ??

Let me ask us all a question - - The answer to which
is heavily influenced by our Over-Achiever Society

***“Is it a measurement of success
that determines our Faithfulness?”***

OR

***“Is it our continued Faithfulness
that determines our Faithfulness?”***

The lesson of NEH CH 13 – is that our Faithfulness is measured
ONLY by our FAITHFULNESS

Not by some Measurement of Success the World
(*incl'd'g the Christian world*) has put on us

Nehemiah was Passionately Faithful to what God Called him to
right up to the very END –

In our **last Msg** (*1st half of CH 13*) we saw **Nehemiah** begin to "**Light the Fire Again**" in the people of God

During the **time** Nehemiah was **away** the people had **broken** or **forgotten**

the Great **Vows** they had **made to God** back in **CH 10**

& they were in **Serious Spiritual Decline**

& we **saw** in our **last** msg when Nehemiah **RETURNED** to Jerusalem . . .

he **PASSIONATELY** began **DRIVING OUT** the **sin** that was **causing** that **Spiritual Decline**

& he **Quickly** & **Directly** began **restoring** the people to **the vows** they had **made** to God

In our **last msg**:

1st) The Enemy **TOBIAH** - had been **MOVED** right **INTO** The **Temple Courts** – to set up shop

2nd) The people had **STOPPED GIVING**

Which is what **ALLOWED** the **Enemy** to **move in** & **sent** the **Levites** back out to **work** in the fields

& Nehemiah **PASSIONATELY** dealt with **both** these tragedies

He Literally **THREW** the Enemy **OUT** of the place of Worship & he **confronted** the **Leaders** about the people **not giving**

& that was just the **FIRST HALF** of **the Ch !!**

There were **TWO** Other Major Tragedies
that had "**PUT THE FIRE OUT**" in the people's **Devotion** to God

The **First one** – is about **DEVOTION** - & **PRIORITY**

A **Double Tragedy** had actually occurred
in the **Financial Lives** of the people

NOT ONLY had they **STOPPED giving** to God (*already saw*)

But they had also replaced their **DEVOTION** to God
with their **DEVOTION** to **MONEY**

Guys – we **THINK** we have this **UNIQUE** economic culture

where we **HAVE** to replace our **DEVOTION** to God
with our **NEED** for **money**

But that **LIE** of the Devil is **NOT** Unique !!

THAT is the **same lie** the Jews in Nehemiah's day **BOUGHT**

Neh 13:15-22 - NLT

15 In those days I saw men of Judah treading out their winepresses on the Sabbath. They were also bringing in grain, loading it on donkeys, and bringing their wine, grapes, figs, and all sorts of produce to Jerusalem to sell on the Sabbath. So I rebuked them for selling their produce on that day.

16 Some men from Tyre (non-Jews), who lived in Jerusalem, were bringing in fish and all kinds of merchandise. They were selling it on the Sabbath to the people of Judah—and in Jerusalem at that!

17 So I confronted the nobles of Judah. "Why are you profaning the Sabbath in this evil way?" I asked.

18 “Wasn’t it just this sort of thing that your ancestors did that caused our God to bring all this trouble upon us and our city? Now you are bringing even more wrath upon Israel by permitting the Sabbath to be desecrated in this way!”

**These Vs’s – Regarding the Sabbath
Are about DEVOTION & PRIORITY**

The Keeping of the Sabbath is about Devoting
ONE Day out of 7 - to GOD

to Rest in Him – to Commune with Him – to Devote to Him

& it’s about making God a PRIORITY
OVER the things of this world

it’s a Tangible way of showing God - & the World

That we are willing to set our SELF-FOCUS aside
& Focus instead on God - & on the things of God

& what we see in these Vs’s
is the Exact Same thing we struggle with today

DEVOTION to SELF - & PRIORITY of SELF
taking over DEVOTION to GOD & PRIORITY of GOD

& when DEVOTION to SELF - & PRIORITY of SELF
take over DEVOTION to God & PRIORITY of God

Then our Time with God - & our relationship with God
becomes ROUTINE & MINIMAL – Like punching a Clock

**“Oh come on now, I’ve been in church 92 MINUTES,
are you trying to kill me here?
I’ve got to get out of here cause
I’ve things I need to do for ME today.
I can’t WASTE my WHOLE day in church, man.
I got things I need to do for MYSELF today”**

Do you see - this is a DEVOTION & a PRIORITY Issue?

Do you see - this is a GOOD WAY for us to CHECK our Priorities?

OK – Let’s see what Nehemiah does about it

**See if you can sense the Intensity with which Nehemiah helps
“REFOCUS” the people’s Devotion & Priority to God on the Sabbath**

Neh 13:19-22 - NLT

19 Then I commanded that the gates of Jerusalem should be shut as darkness fell every Friday evening, not to be opened until the Sabbath ended. I sent some of my own servants to guard the gates so that no merchandise could be brought in on the Sabbath day.

20 The merchants and tradesmen with a variety of wares camped outside Jerusalem once or twice.

21 But I spoke sharply to them and said, “What are you doing out here, camping around the wall? If you do this again, I will arrest you!” (ESV - “lay hands on you”) And that was the last time they came on the Sabbath.

22 Then I commanded the Levites to purify themselves and to guard the gates in order to preserve the holiness of the Sabbath.

**The people had become so focused on
Serving Themselves - instead of Serving God**

→ →

that **desperate measures** were needed
to *help* them **REFOCUS**

So **Nehemiah** "**Pulled the Plug**" on the **TV**
& he **SHUT** the **WORLD – OUTSIDE**

So that the people of God – **Could Spend Time** with God

But **the world wanted in** very badly didn't they (v.20)
they were "***camping outside the door***"

& so Nehemiah, again, **Got ANGRY**
& he **spoke SHARPLY** to the Traders of the **WORLD**

& he **told them** - if they **show up** at his family's door again
he would **LAY HANDS** on them (**NOT** for prayer)

Listen **PLEASE** – **You Leaders** of your households – you **FATHERS**

SHUT the **WORLD** Outside - & **MAKE TIME** for your family
to be **DEVOTED** to **GOD** - & to **set God** as their **PRIORITY**

& it will **NOT** be **easy**

Because those who are **selling** the "**Wares of the World**"
They **want IN** Really **BAD** !!!!

& they will **CAMP** - outside your **home**
waiting to **ENTICE** you & your **family** . . .

to be **Devoted** to your **SELF** - instead of to **GOD**
& to make your **SELF** Priority # 1 – instead of **God**

Run them off - - **VIOLENTLY** if necessary !!!

& then – Notice **Nehemiah's Prayer** at the End of **V.22**
This is the **2nd time** he's prayed this in **Ch 13**

Neh 13:22 (B)

22 . . . Remember this good deed also, O my God! Have compassion on me according to your great and unfailing love.

Remember this prayer – cause we're **gonna focus on it** – at the end

So the **First Tragedy** in this section
had to do with **DEVOTION** & **PRIORITY** on the **Sabbath**

& now – **Starting in V.23** – we see the **SECOND** Big Tragedy
& Nehemiah gets **VERY PASSIONATE** about this one

Neh 13:23-24 – NLT

23 About the same time I realized that some of the men of Judah had married women from Ashdod, Ammon, and Moab.

24 Furthermore, half their children spoke the language of Ashdod or of some other people and could not speak the language of Judah at all.

One of the **Solemn Vows** the people had made in **Ch 10 v.30** was
“We will not give our daughters to the peoples of the land or take their daughters for our sons.”

& If you'll just **GLANCE** back **up** at **V.1 of Ch 13** You'll see
it is **these same people** – the **Ammonites** & the **Moabites**

that were **NOT** even **permitted** to enter into the **Temple**
because they were the **sworn enemies** of God

& **Now** – The **Men** of Judah (Leaders)

were **marrying** these women of the **enemies** of God
& being **IMMERSED** in **their culture**

WHY was this such a **HUGE PROBLEM** ?

Well - **just skip Down** a Vs - & look at **Vs 26**

Neh 13:26-27 – NLT

***26 “Wasn’t this exactly what led King Solomon of Israel into sin?” I demanded. “There was no king from any nation who could compare to him, and God loved him and made him king over all Israel. But even he was led into sin by his foreign wives.
27 How could you even think of committing this sinful deed and acting unfaithfully toward God by marrying foreign women?”***

Inter-marrying was a **HUGE** problem
because it always led to **SPIRITUAL COMPROMISE**

It led to **HUGE Spiritual Compromise** for **King Solomon**

& **throughout** Israel’s life - it **ALWAYS** led to **Spiritual Compromise**

EZRA – Nehemiah’s “forerunner”
had **dealt** very **severely** with this

& had even **demande**d
the **Israelite** men **DIVORCE** their **PAGEN** wives

Because this Inter-Marrying had **ALWAYS** Led
to **Spiritual Downfall**

& **Honestly** – Still **TODAY** - **Believers Marrying Unbelievers**
Will **Almost Always** lead to a **Spiritual Downfall**

Which is why N.T. Believers are WARNED against it in 2Cor 6:14

AND – not only were the leaders of Judah doing this
But EVEN the PREISTS were doing it

A Grandson of The HIGH PREIST Eliashib
had married a Daughter of the ARCH-ENEMY Sanballot

Neh 13:28 - NLT

28 One of the sons of Joiada son of Eliashib the high priest had married a daughter of Sanballat the Horonite, so I banished him from my presence.

THIS – is almost unbelievable !!!

How determined is the ENEMY to Get Close to God's Leaders
& to destroy any Good that they could do for God's Kingdom ??

Look closely at this – Nehemiah has TWO ARCH-ENEMIES
Tobiah & Sanballot

& back up in V.5 – The High Priest ELIASHIB
somehow became related to TOBIAH (*by marriage*) (Enemy #1)

& then - Eliashib moves TOBIAH (enemy)
RIGHT into the Temple Courts

& NOW – The Grandson of this same High Priest
MARRIES a daughter of SANBALLAT (Enemy #2)

The Enemy is Deceptive & Manipulative
& he will work VERY HARD – to get close to you

& So – Nehemiah did what was RIGHT

He THREW TOBIAH OUT of the Temple Courts
along with all his stuff (last msg)

& now – He BANISHES this young Priest from his presence
because he married the enemy's daughter

The HEB word used here - LIT means CHASED
which is EXACTLY what the ESV says

Neh 13:28 (b) – ESV

28 . . . Therefore I chased him from me.

I LOVE the IMAGES I get reading Nehemiah

First he's THROWING one enemies stuff out of the Temple

& then he's CHASING a Priest away
because he married a daughter of the enemy

Listen Guys – I know I'm a little RUFF sometimes
& I might be - a little too DIRECT at times

But I promise you this – What I do – By God's Grace
I do for our Spiritual Good – as well as I possibly can

Including Chasing Enemies Off – whenever possible !!

But prayerfully – I will NEVER have to go to the FULL-MEASURE
Nehemiah went to – back up in V.25

This is where **Nehemiah CONFRONTS** the Leaders
about them **Breaking** their **VOW** to God in this matter

Neh 13:25 - NLT

25 So I confronted them and called down curses on them. I beat some of them and pulled out their hair. I made them swear in the name of God that they would not let their children intermarry with the pagan people of the land.

Listen – Please – **Nehemiah** is trying to **Light the Fire Again**
under the **people** of God

I know – It **SEEMS LIKE** Nehemiah is not being;

Very **Politically Correct**

Very **Tolerant**

And **it seems** . . . **NOT** being very **LOVING**

But please, please - **SEE** the **PASSION** in Nehemiah
for his **FAITHFULNESS** to God

He is - ***“all in” - “sold out” - “no matter what”***

Doing **ALL** he can do – to **Draw** the people **BACK** to God

To **see** God’s People **WALK** uprightly

To **see** them **MAINTAIN** their **Commitments**

To **see** them **KEEP** their Lives **PURE**

It **may not seem** like it at 1st glance - -

But I Say - - This is a **VERY LOVING Response**
to try to **REFOCUS** God’s People on **what is right**

Often – we need **HELP - SEEING Who** our Enemies Are
& **how close** they've **gotten**, in our lives

& Nehemiah is **HELPING** the people see this -
for **their** own **spiritual good**

& he **KNOWS** - God **WILL DEAL**
with **those** who have **committed** these sins

& So **Nehemiah** Prays in **V.29**

Neh 13:29 - NLT

*29 Remember them, O my God, for they have defiled the
priesthood and the solemn vows of the priests and Levites.*

Nehemiah is simply **TURNING** the **Offenders** over to God

WHILE he is **doing** all he can - to **KEEP THEM**
from doing **any more damage** to God's people

& then – **Finally** – we have One More **AGGRESSIVE statement**
at the **beginning** of **V.30**

Neh 13:30(A) – NLT

30 So I purged out everything foreign . . .

Now I don't mean to be **TOO Graphic** here –
but **maybe** some of us **need a picture** painted for us

When the **BODY** has swallowed something **POISONOUS**
what is the **IMMEDIATE REMEDY** ??

to **PURGE IT OUT** !!! (*get the picture?*)

So – can you imagine please – YOUR Spiritual Body,
either personally, or corporately here in the church

If we have SWALLOWED the POISON of the Enemy

If we have BOUGHT INTO the POISON of NOT Giving

If we have SWALLOWED the POISON of SELF-Devotion

If we have MARRIED ourselves to the ENEMY . . .

then there MUST BE some PURGING taking place !!!

& so I want to Encourage you – PURGE AWAY !!!

Get what is POISONING your Spiritual Life - OUT
Get it out !! . . . You'll feel better

Amen ??

& so - as we close the book of Nehemiah

Nehemiah AGAIN - sets up Protections & Safe-Guards
to keep the Worship of God running SMOOTHLY in Jerusalem

Neh 13:30-31 - NLT

*30 So I purged out everything foreign and assigned tasks to the
priests and Levites, making certain that each knew his work.*

*31 I also made sure that the supply of wood for the altar and the
first portions of the harvest were brought at the proper times . . .*

AGAIN – Nehemiah RE-ARRANGES - & RE-ORGANIZES
the Worship of God – to put everything BACK in Order

& the Emphasis is on - - AGAIN !!

And now (finally) we see

What **to me** is one of the Most Incredible "**WRAP UPS**"
of a **Spiritual Leader's Life** – in all the Bible

At the **very end of** his Memoires –
Nehemiah **says something** that is Very, Very **Meaningful**

he **turns from** all the people - & **all the** work . .
& **he says** with (seemingly) - a sense of **Tremendous PEACE**

Neh 13:31(B) - NLT

. . . Remember this in my favor, O my God.

What a **Wonderful Ending** - to an **Incredible Life** of Ministry

What a **Wonderful Final Prayer**
for **any of us** who are **Serving the Lord** with our **LIVES**

Please see the **POWER** in this **FINAL PRAYER** of Nehemiah

After **ALL** he's **DONE**
After **ALL** he's **BEEN THRU**
After **ALL** the **Passion** & **Energy** & **Sacrifice** . . .

Nehemiah fully, **completely**, in **EVERY WAY**

Entrusts his entire **Life of Ministry**
to a **ONE SENTENCE PRAYER**

Remember this in my favor, O my God.

& Nehemiah **KNOWS** that God **WILL** Remember it -
EVERY SINGLE DETAIL

& in the end - **THAT is ALL that is important to Nehemiah !!!**

It's **SO SAD** to me – that **WE**, in the Ministry,
have been **conditioned** to believe,

that we need some **GREAT, MEASURABLE** Ministry Success

It's **SO SAD** that our *Church Culture* **IMPLIES**

that **BIGGER** is **GODLIER**
& **MORE STUFF** equals **MORE MINISTRY SUCCESS**

I don't know how that can be true . . .

if you look at **ABSOLUTELY HUGE Religions & Movements**
that are **totally UNGODLY**

But **somehow** – while we were **young pastors** growing up
it was **CLEARLY IMPLIED** to us

That **MORE** people - & **MORE** stuff
Means greater **Spiritual Success**

& **IF** that is the **CASE**
then **Nehemiah** ended up - **A COMPLETE FAILURE**

Because at the **END** of his Ministry – he was back to **SQUARE ONE** –
starting completely over with the **SAME PEOPLE**

& **Who is it** – In the Bible – that **we could say** ended their ministries
with an **International CHAIN of MEGA-Churches**

& **All Fed** by live **Satellite VIDEO feed** – **EVERY** Sunday Morning

Guys – If **NUMBERS** - & **STUFF** means **Spiritual Success** . . .
then **OUR LORD** who was a **Terrible FAILURE** in His Ministry

Because at the end of the **Ministry** of **Jesus Christ** Himself
Even **the 11** He managed to keep around – had **ALL** scrambled

But - - **listen carefully** to Jesus' **OWN PRAYER**

& see if you can sense - a **PASSION for FAITHFULNESS**
in the **Prayer** of our **LORD**

Jn 17:4 – NLT (Jesus praying)

4 I brought glory to you here on earth by completing the work you gave me to do.

WAIT A MINUTE !!!

Is there NOT an example in that prayer - **for us** to follow??

I brought glory to you here on earth by completing the work you gave me to do.

If we can say that – **THEN** we have said **EVERYTHING**
about the **Spiritual Success** of our lives

We just had a **Memorial Service** for **Grandma ELLIE**

who was a **PILLAR of Faith** for her Family
for the last **20 years** of her life

& We're about to have a **Memorial Service** for **Carol Widney**
Who was **ALSO** the **Spiritual Pillar** of her Family

Who Imparted Strong Faith to her Children & her Grand-Children

& who served the Lord FAITHFULLY
including 15 yrs in Fulltime ministry

Can these Women of God not pray
THE SAME prayer Jesus Christ prayed

I brought glory to you here on earth by completing the work you gave me to do.

And can they not pray the same prayer Nehemiah prayed

Remember this in my favor, O my God.

& Should we be looking – for MORE Success – that THAT ???

Consider the Greatest Apostle of the N.T. - - PAUL

We see the exact SAME *Passion for Faithfulness* in the Apostle Paul

Paul had Two Incredible Missionary Journey's
where he basically started a church in every city he woke up in

But at the end of his life – similar to Nehemiah -
Problems had seriously infiltrated MOST of those churches

The churches were dealing with Worldliness & False Teaching
& some were - falling away

& when Paul wrote his final letter to Timothy
He says nothing about whether his work was a "Success" or not

He said one thing – **INSTEAD** . . .

in 2Tim 4:7 (ESV)

7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

For **Paul** – Like **Nehemiah** – **in the end** what mattered

was his **FAITHFULNESS** to **DO** what God had called him to do –
& to **DO IT** until the **VERY END**

Paul was **NOT** concerned about **MEASURING**
WHAT he had accomplished

He was **ONLY** concerned about
being **FAITHFUL** to the **VERY END**

Guys – **This Race** - is a **MARATHON**
& the **ONLY** Measurement **I FIND** in God's **WORD** is . . .

Have we been Faithful to what God has Called us to do

if **we have** – then we can **join the ranks**
of the **Passionately Faithful**

Like **Nehemiah** - & Like **Paul**
& like **Carol Widney & Grandma Ellie**

& like **SO MANY others** – who **Run the Race**
Faithful Serving the **LORD** - **right up** to the end . . .

it is our **FAITHFULNESS** to God that **determines** whether we hear . . .

Mat 25:21 – ESV

21 . . . ‘Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.’

If you are a **Christian** today – **YOU** have a **PURPOSE**
Given to you **BY** God

& your **FAITHFULNESS** to that **PURPOSE**
is **God’s ONLY measurement** - of your **Spiritual Success**

When **Nehemiah** prays this simple prayer
THREE TIMES thru Ch 13 . . .

Remember this in my favor, O my God.

He was **TRUSTING GOD**
to **see his Faithfulness** in all he had done

& he was **SATISFIED** with **GOD** - & **GOD ALONE**
Recognizing his Faithfulness

Because he **knew** – in the end – **THAT** was what **was important**

Let’s PRAY – that **We** can **say** the same thing