

XIV. Nehemiah in Biblical Perspective
The Memoirs of Nehemiah - Arise and Build
“A Biblical Reality Check”
Nehemiah 13
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December 4, 2011 – Morning Sermon

We are in the last chapter of the book of Nehemiah, chapter 13. I'll begin with the first three verses and then we'll work our way through the chapter. Nehemiah 13:1-3 says [1] *On that day they read from the Book of Moses in the hearing of the people. And in it was found written that no Ammonite or Moabite should ever enter the assembly of God, [2] for they did not meet the people of Israel with bread and water, but hired Balaam against them to curse them—yet our God turned the curse into a blessing. [3] As soon as the people heard the law, they separated from Israel all those of foreign descent.* The grass withers, the flower fades, God's Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

I titled this last chapter “A Biblical Reality Check” and I want to tell you I'm very encouraged in the Word of God because it is not only inherent and infallible but obsessively honest. It is honest about people. It doesn't cover people up. The people of God are murderers, adulterers, thieves, religious terrorists who get converted by the grace of God and God uses them. God's Word exposes what it means to be a sinner saved by the grace of God. It is honest about events and history.

Nehemiah 13 is one of those chapters that after working my way through it and the rest of the book I confess to you I'm disappointed in it. I am discouraged when I initially read Nehemiah 13. In fact I want to go back and ask the Holy Spirit or Nehemiah “Why didn't you stop with Nehemiah 12?” There we are worshipping and giving praise to God. Revival has broken out. The wall is rebuilt, the people are rebuilt and there's giving praise to God and they set out in Nehemiah 12 for thirteen years of following Christ and being obedient in worship and praise to God under the leadership of Nehemiah as governor. Then we get to Nehemiah 13 and they are right back where they started from. I get discouraged and disappointed when I read that initially.

It kind of reminds me of something from J.R.R. Tolkien and my favorite of his writings is *The Return of the King*. In that book they burn that ring and destroy evil and Frodo lives and Sam lives. Sam even comes back and gets married and has kids. Okay so it's time to end the book there but they don't end the book there. Frodo dies. I talked with my son about and ask him why Tolkien didn't end the book there. My son said “Dad, Tolkien wants everybody to understand that the grace of God in life is the grace of God in death and when you live for God in life it will probably cost you your life.” The wounds of Frodo led him to death and to a better and more glorious existence, but it was honest. His faithfulness had a price tag. He had to die.

We live in a broken world and the Bible is honest about this world and about what we're facing. I'll give you one right now. Revival may bless a generation and may have overflow to a coming generation but revival has to come to every generation. You can't have one in one generation and it suffice for the next thirty generations. It has to come in every generation. I expected it to end in Nehemiah 12 and Nehemiah should have gone on a tour speaking about how to revitalize your city. He might have called it From

Embers to a Flame. He doesn't do that but when you read Nehemiah 13, the city that was in ruins where the walls and the people were rebuilt, the embers that came back to a flame are now an ember again. Look how short of a time it took place.

Nehemiah 1 through 12 covers one year. Nehemiah comes to do his ministry. They rebuild the wall in 52 days. The wall gets rebuilt the people get rebuilt. Then in the latter part of Nehemiah 12 it says for the rest of Nehemiah's governorship they served and honored the Lord. How long was he there? Nehemiah 5 tells us he was there from the 20th year to the 32nd year of King Artaxerxes. Nehemiah was governor and led the people in revitalization and revival for thirteen years and then he gets called away.

So what does he find when he gets back? We don't exactly know how long he was gone but it was anywhere from eight to fifteen years but when he gets back this is what he finds. The first thing he finds is an initial discovery. They are having a Bible reading from the Pentateuch. As they are reading from the books of Moses they say "We're not supposed to have Ammonites and Moabites among God's people." When God's people were brought out of Exodus on their way back they did not bring bread and water they needed and the Ammonites and Moabites tried to assault them. They tried to hire a false prophet to come in among them and teach false things. His name was Balaam and because of what they did God declared for that period of time no work of grace was to go to Moab and Ammon and they would have no place in the house of God. Because they had been unfaithful they removed them. This wasn't a racial thing but it was a religious thing. They had them brought in among God's people those who were enemies of the covenant people of God as if they were followers of God. They said "no, we must be distinct for God's house is a place that reaches out to all the nations but you must come into the Kingdom of God to be a part of the house of God."

In the New Testament church they came because they professed faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and had been brought into that covenant relationship but now they say these people are not a part of God's covenant people so we will go back and make that distinction. We don't know quite when this happened but they discovered, repented and cleansed the people of God and the city of God of those who were not followers of the One true and living God in faithfulness to God's Word. So how did this happen? Let's work our way through the second part and find out. There was a series of discoveries.

Here's what I think happened. In Nehemiah 13:1-4 Nehemiah came back, made some discoveries and dealt with them. Those discoveries are listed in Nehemiah 13:4-29. As he is doing that he reinstated the public reading of the Scripture. When they did this they realized they had been unfaithful to the Word of God. That is what Nehemiah 13:1-3 describes. Before they did that there were some other discoveries that he had previously seen. As I got disappointed and discouraged when I was reading this I began to realize that perhaps some of the most helpful themes in the book of Nehemiah are actually in this chapter for my everyday life, as a believer and a leader for the Kingdom of God. For instance, Nehemiah has over twenty plus prayers. He is a man of Word and prayer. Four of those prayers are found here in Nehemiah 13 and they all begin with the word 'remember' as he cast himself upon God's grace. Each one of his discoveries are punctuated at the end with a prayer.

The first thing he discovers is what has happened to the house of God while he was gone. Nehemiah 13:4-9 says [4] *Now before this, Eliashib the priest, who was*

appointed over the chambers of the house of our God, and who was related to Tobiah (an enemy of God, one who had put the armies together to assault the walls and the people, he was the trash talker. This time he is not outside yelling at people working on the wall.), [5] prepared for Tobiah a large chamber where they had previously put the grain offering, the frankincense, the vessels, and the tithes of grain, wine, and oil, which were given by commandment to the Levites, singers, and gatekeepers, and the contributions for the priests. [6] While this was taking place, I was not in Jerusalem, for in the thirty-second year of Artaxerxes king of Babylon I went to the king. And after some time I asked leave of the king [7] and came to Jerusalem, and I then discovered the evil that Eliashib had done for Tobiah, preparing for him a chamber in the courts of the house of God. [8] And I was very angry, and I threw all the household furniture of Tobiah out of the chamber. [9] Then I gave orders, and they cleansed the chambers, and I brought back there the vessels of the house of God, with the grain offering and the frankincense.

He first discovers that the house of God has been contaminated. Not only are there Ammonites and Moabites unrepentant, living in the city of God but we have this man Tobiah who is an enemy of God who has an apartment in the House of God. The very place that ought to have the tithes, the first fruits and the stewardship of God's people to do the work of ministry, he has set up housekeeping. On top of that Eliashib the High Priest welcomed him in there because he had a marital relationship with him.

When Nehemiah sees this enemy of God who is unrepentant, not outside yelling taunts at the people of God but now inside in a room in the house of God, there proclaiming and working his blasphemy and his profanity against the One true and living God, upheld in the place where God's house was, Nehemiah became angry. Nehemiah threw him out. He threw the chambers out and brought rites of baptism in. I can just see them with the hyssop, going through with the water cleansing the place. It's as if Nehemiah is saying "Get the smell of this out of here! Cleanse the House of God and take care of it. You have allowed this impenitent, false leader in the midst of God's people" and with anger he cleansed it and removed him. Eliashib had done that. The very place that ought to have those things that God's people use to worship Him, the tithe, the first fruits and all of those things is now empty of those things and it was filled with one who was against the Lord.

That's not all he found out. Look what else happens in Nehemiah 13:10-13 which says *[10] I also found out that the portions of the Levites had not been given to them, so that the Levites and the singers, who did the work, had fled each to his field. (The Levites had gone out and bought land. Why?) [11] So I confronted the officials and said, "Why is the house of God forsaken?" And I gathered them together and set them in their stations. [12] Then all Judah brought the tithe of the grain, wine, and oil into the storehouses. [13] And I appointed as treasurers over the storehouses Shelemiah the priest, Zadok the scribe, and Pedaiah of the Levites, and as their assistant Hanan the son of Zaccur, son of Mattaniah, for they were considered reliable, and their duty was to distribute to their brothers.*

So not only had Eliashib brought in Tobiah to live in the house of God but the Levites aren't there taking care of things. There is no tithe there to support the Levites. The people quit bringing the tithe to support the Levites so the Levites forsook the house of God and went back to their own fields. So Nehemiah confronts the nobles of Judah and brings the Levites back in. He said "If these Levites won't be faithful then I'll

appoint new leaders and Levites who will be faithful and reliable. They will not forsake the house of God.” So he puts them in place. He discovers that not only is the house of God being misused but it had also been abandoned. So now he brings repentance to that and he punctuates this with prayer.

Nehemiah 13:14 says *[14] Remember me, O my God, concerning this, and do not wipe out my good deeds that I have done for the house of my God and for his service.* Can you imagine what Nehemiah must have felt like? For twelve years he had led the revival along with Ezra of the walls and the people. Then he goes away for ten to fifteen years and when he gets back the enemy of God is now in the house of God. Every store room where the people had made a covenant to keep it filled with the tithes and the offerings to the praise of God are now empty. The Levites are no longer being supported. The Levites then abandoned the house of God. How amazing it is that Nehemiah was able to come back after fifteen years or so and give leadership this directed. Nehemiah not only angrily puts out Tobiah but he then begins to call the people to faithfulness in their stewardship and calls the Levites back to their station. Then he calls upon the Lord, “Remember me O God, this is Your house and I have tried to uphold it” sealing it with prayer.

That’s not all. There is another discovery and response. Not only is the house of the Lord being profaned but the day of the Lord is being profaned. Nehemiah 13:15-18 says *[15] In those days I saw in Judah people treading winepresses on the Sabbath, and bringing in heaps of grain and loading them on donkeys, and also wine, grapes, figs, and all kinds of loads, which they brought into Jerusalem on the Sabbath day. And I warned them on the day when they sold food. [16] Tyrians also, who lived in the city, brought in fish and all kinds of goods and sold them on the Sabbath to the people of Judah, in Jerusalem itself! [17] Then I confronted the nobles of Judah and said to them, “What is this evil thing that you are doing, profaning the Sabbath day? [18] Did not your fathers act in this way, and did not our God bring all this disaster on us and on this city? Now you are bringing more wrath on Israel by profaning the Sabbath.”*

Nehemiah goes out on the Sabbath and sees the people working as usual. They forgot the worship and praise of God. They had not set aside the day of the Lord therefore no day was given unto the Lord. It was work for themselves. They had profaned the Lord’s Day and then there was commerce right there in the presence of the temple. Not only were people outside of the covenant doing it but the people of the covenant were participating in it. Nehemiah says to the leaders “How did you let this happen? Don’t you remember the reason we were in exile? It was because we had abandoned the Law of God in general and the Sabbath in particular. God is jealous for His day. Look what we have done to it. We have made it our day and we have profaned that day. Why would you let this happen among God’s people? Are you inviting the judgment of God again upon His people and His discipling hand by your silence as leaders?”

So what does he do? Let’s look further. Nehemiah 13:19-21 says *[19] As soon as it began to grow dark at the gates of Jerusalem before the Sabbath, I commanded that the doors should be shut and gave orders that they should not be opened until after the Sabbath. And I stationed some of my servants at the gates, that no load might be brought in on the Sabbath day. [20] Then the merchants and sellers of all kinds of wares lodged outside Jerusalem once or twice. [21] But I warned them and said to them, “Why do you lodge outside the wall? **If you do so again, I will lay hands on you.**” From that time on*

they did not come on the Sabbath. I have to confess, I love that. There is a lot of things that come through the church concerning discipline and we have to handle it appropriately but I love it when discipline takes place in a family before it ever gets to a church. Here Nehemiah basically tells them if you try to do this again “I’ll put my hands on you” and amazingly they didn’t do it again.

Then it goes on to say in Nehemiah 13:22, [22] *Then I commanded the Levites that they should purify themselves and come and guard the gates, to keep the Sabbath day holy. Remember this also in my favor, O my God, and spare me according to the greatness of your steadfast love.* So now Nehemiah has restored by decree the proper use of the house of the Lord, the proper view of the Sabbath day before the people of God by declaring they can’t do their work in the fields and they are not to do commerce. Nehemiah is all for commerce where everybody can make a profit but on one day just give it a rest and come to the Lord who gives you the ability to live, move, breathe and work and give Him praise and glory. Rest in Him.

What else happens? Here is another discovery. Nehemiah 13:23-25 says [23] *In those days also I saw the Jews who had married women of Ashdod, Ammon, and Moab. [24] And half of their children spoke the language of Ashdod, and they could not speak the language of Judah, but only the language of each people. [25] And I confronted them and cursed them and beat some of them and **pulled out their hair.** And I made them take an oath in the name of God, saying, “You shall not give your daughters to their sons, or take their daughters for your sons or for yourselves.* That’s my kind of minister with the pulling out of hair. Every time I read that I’m reminded of my grandmother who used to get so upset with me. She must have got it from this text because she would say to me “Son, I’m going to snatch you bald headed.” Obviously she did. This pulling out of hair actually has some cultural significance in that day.

Nehemiah 13:26-27 says [26] *Did not Solomon king of Israel sin on account of such women? Among the many nations there was no king like him, and he was beloved by his God, and God made him king over all Israel. Nevertheless, foreign women made even him to sin. [27] Shall we then listen to you and do all this great evil and act treacherously against our God by marrying foreign women?”* So now the sanctity of a covenant in marriage and covenant faithfulness has been broken. Again this isn’t racial because Boaz would marry Ruth who was a Moabite but why? She repented and converted. This is a covenantal religious issue like when we say you marry in the Lord but they weren’t marrying in the Lord.

You might be thinking Nehemiah is against love, courtship and dating but he’s not. You need to understand marriage back in those times. Marriages were either arranged or consciously done for the purpose of not only affection but for what the marriage would gain in alliance, treaties, powers and possessions. So he said to the parents, “You’re sacrificing your children by marrying them to foreign people for what you will get out of it and look what is happening. This generation isn’t even dead yet and you can’t even speak our language much less know our Word because you are not faithful as parents. You would sacrifice your children for your own benefit.” So he calls them to repentance and to seek to be faithful before the Lord.

Then he punctuates this one with another ‘remember’ prayer. You’ll see that not another enemy had come back and that was Sanballat by intermarrying within the family of the high priest which is already opened the door to Tobiah. Nehemiah 13:28-31 says

[28] And one of the sons of Jehoiada, the son of Eliashib the high priest, was the son-in-law of Sanballat the Horonite. Therefore I chased him from me. (His prayer)

[29] Remember them, O my God, because they have desecrated the priesthood and the covenant of the priesthood and the Levites. (Here is his summation and declaration)

[30] Thus I cleansed them from everything foreign, and I established the duties of the priests and Levites, each in his work; [31] and I provided for the wood offering at appointed times, and for the firstfruits. Remember me, O my God, for good.

I want to give you five takeaways that are absolutely crucial from this text of Scripture. The first one is they're back again. Who are they? It is the enemies of God. Remember the revival had put them away. Sanballat and Tobiah were gone but here they are again. Why are the enemies of God and God's people back again? It was because they never left. They might have gone underground for awhile but they never left. Do you remember when Jesus dealt with The Enemy (Satan) who is behind all the enemies of God? He dealt with him in a place called the wilderness. Did Jesus win the victory over Satan in the wilderness? Yes. Do you remember what happened next? Satan left Him...for awhile.

Do you remember when Paul ministered three years at Ephesus? He said "You'll never see me again but upon my departure savage wolves will come in from among yourselves teaching perverse things and leading the people of God astray to themselves." Why did he know that Satan would attack when he left? It was because Satan had attacked when he was there.

We have three enemies. They are the world, the flesh and the devil. The world is that system of rebellion against God, outside. The flesh is the old man inside. Satan uses both of those to entice us away. The enemies of God never leave. Here is what happens. Revival gives victories over the enemies of God and empowers God's people to overcome the enemies of God. There was victory over Sanballat and Tobiah but revival does not eradicate the enemies of God nor their presence so be on guard. Walk wisely. Put on the full armor of God. Stand firm. Take up the weapons of the Spirit.

The ever present enemies of God come in two ways, by persecution and penetration. Persecution had failed at Jerusalem in the days of Nehemiah. They had lined up their armies but the wall still got built but the wall wasn't able to keep them out from penetration as they are found now in the very place where God's offerings ought to be. They have set up residence in the house of God as they penetrated into the midst. Church after church in our country is failing and it's not because of persecution. Our problem isn't out there, it is in the church where we have allowed the Balaams, Tobiahs and Sanballats of this world, not simply unwarranted into a membership without a true profession of faith but we have allowed them in our pulpits. Because of that God's people have been led astray.

The enemies of God are always at work and the people of God have to be ever vigilant but the best defense is a good offense. Put on the armor of God, take up the weapons of the Spirit and follow Christ with all of your heart. Give not the enemies of God a place in your heart for your heart is filled with Christ. That's where God has called us and that's the ever present lesson here.

The second takeaway is leadership works both ways. I know I've said this before but I can't leave this chapter without saying it again. Good leadership will produce good results. Thank the Lord for Nehemiah. Even after fifteen years he can come back and

pick up leadership and be determined for the Lord. Thank the Lord for Zerubbabel, Joshua the high priest and Ezra. Thank the Lord for the leaders that got up on the wall when the time came and didn't run when the threats of Tobiah and Sanballat came. Thank the Lord that Nehemiah has come back.

Look at Eliashib and the Levites who because God's people quit bringing the tithe when back to the fields. You might think they didn't pay the Levites salaries so they had to go back. No, you don't understand the call to the ministry. When God's people disobediently would not support them and the Levites left the house of God, it revealed that they were hirelings. When God has called someone into leadership they don't stay in leadership because of the benefits of the office but they are in the leadership for the call. They are not there to be fulfilled in the ministry but they are there to fulfill the ministry. They are there to be poured out as a drink offering even believing that if God's people won't take care of them then God can raise up ravens to feed me, but the Levites had abandoned the house of God.

Why is it that when he saw the empty rooms, the people desecrating the Sabbath, and commerce in the house of the Lord that he didn't go after the people? The first thing he did was go to the nobles of Judah and said "Why haven't you led this city? These things are happening because you have abandoned leadership." Leadership works in both directions now from time to time God overcomes bad leadership and sometimes good leadership gets disappointed but by in large God works through leadership.

Remember when Nehemiah said to them "Can you get any better than Solomon?" Solomon got his eyes off the Lord by abandoning covenant faithfulness with his intermarriages. He was led into sin and the destruction of an entire nation was the result. Tobiah and Sanballat are obvious but what about Eliashib the high priest who had seen the hand of God but yet compromised the house of God and the day of the Lord?

The third takeaway is the acid test of revival. We usually call this stewardship but the acid test of revival is what do we do with God's precious gifts and blessings He has given us? Here are my finances, my resources, the days of my life and my breath, what do I do with them? We have the phrase 'time, treasure and talents' but the acid test is when we become absorbed with ourself and rely upon ourself then we will abandon the Lord's Day, the Lord's people, the Lord's Word and even our own children if necessary because we are self reliant instead of God reliant.

God says in the matter of stewardship time and time again, put Me to the test for I'll be a debtor to no man. Everything you have I gave to you. The question isn't much or little but it's what will you do with what I've given to you? I'm able to say this because of many of you who in economic difficulty have responded with joyful hearts before the Lord so I'm not saying this out of some axe to grind. I'm amazed at some of the sacrificial giving and love of these people but I know there are some of us here who need to hear it.

The acid test is in the days of difficulty and challenge who is our God? If it's the idolatry of self it will show up in our money. We'll get angry about it, hoard it, rob the Lord and it will show up in our time. Do we give our time to the Lord or not? That is the acid test. In those days you can begin to see who actually has our heart. Nehemiah as governor goes after the externals. I'm not going to let you break the Sabbath or desecrate the house of the Lord and I'll make you bring in the tithe but what he couldn't get to was their heart and that's really where the matter of stewardship begins. Am I relying upon

the Lord and I love Him who has given me everything so I'm faithful or am I relying upon myself?

Some of you are good students of the book of Nehemiah. Do you remember the covenant of renewal that they took in the previous chapters? The renewal they signed was that they would be faithful to observe the Lord's Day, faithful with the tithe and faithful to the house of the Lord. Fifteen years later what did they abandon? They abandoned the tithe, the house of the Lord and the Day of the Lord. Revival has to come in every generation. It just doesn't move forward. Revival is not the objective. It is the means to an end. It is not the end. They had the revival experience and that was enough. Revival was there that they would exalt the Lord all the days of their life.

The fourth takeaway is another look at hair pulling. I'm going to start a course at the Birmingham Theological Seminary called the 'Ministry of Hair Pulling.' I want to give you just a little bit different look at this. Nehemiah is not the pastor or the priest. He is the governor and in those days in the Old Testament he was supposed to enforce the Law of God. So Nehemiah didn't call out the police. Nehemiah became the police. Nehemiah stepped up and said "I'm not going to allow this. You need to deal with your heart and as governor I'm not going to allow it because I know what's going to happen if I allow it." Here's why we have to tame down guys like Nehemiah. I'm not saying that you should pull someone's hair out if they don't come to Sunday school but you need to see Nehemiah's passion here.

Nehemiah loves the Lord and hates sin because he knows what sin is going to do. If we keep doing this with the Sabbath, the house of the Lord and to the name of the Lord don't you remember what God has promised to do? Don't you know we have already experienced this? I will not let you go back to that. I will stand in your way. I will do everything I can to stop it because if we begin to do the very thing that sent us into exile I love the Lord and you too much and I hate sin too much to let that happen.

There are a lot of us who are silent when we need to speak up. You see people make mistakes in courtship, marriage and we're not speaking up because we're afraid we might not be liked. We watch people making wrong decisions about how we appear in public in terms of modesty but we're afraid to speak up. That is telling people that I need your love more than I need to show you God's love. I'm humble, gracious and speaking the truth in love. If you withhold truth to people who are at the wrong place with the computer, who are dabbling in a wrong relationship, who are making wrong decisions in life, then you become like the nobles of Judah who were silent while Nehemiah was gone. Nehemiah says "I will not be silent. You may not like me but I'm not here for you to like me. Lord, I'm here for You to remember me therefore I will speak the truth."

J.I. Packard has greatly helped me in this series in his commentary on Nehemiah. When he gets to this place in Nehemiah he says "There is the title for my commentary – A Passion For Faithfulness." Nehemiah wants the people of God to be faithful to the Lord God. Let me put it this way - To falter in the pursuit of joyful and aggressive holiness ensures the loss of every gain in revival. In other words, if revival has become an end in itself instead of the power of God that has visited us so that we can aggressively and joyfully pursue holiness for the glory of God, then all of the gains for God's grace and revival will be squandered away (for we're not doing this to be saved because God saves us, but we're doing this for our Savior because we love Him. We hate sin and its

effects in the lives of people.) That's exactly what has happened here. All of the gains of God's grace and mercy were squandered away.

Here is the last takeaway. There is bad news and good news. The bad news is Nehemiah did everything he could but he didn't get to the hearts of the people. They didn't repent so in a few years the last prophet will be sent. They won't repent and there will be four hundred years of silence. By the way, all those walls will come down and not one stone will be left. I can take you over there and show you. The walls are down that were built in the days of Nehemiah. They were added to in the days of Herod but they are all down now because they didn't repent. Nehemiah brought the external but there was no movement in their heart and so the walls came down.

I also have some good news. After that four hundred years God will speak again. I love Christmas. The Word became flesh. God speaks in His Son and that Son will be brought to that same temple even though it was refurbished by Herod. Jesus will be presented on the eighth day and then thirty three years later He'll come back to that temple. He will see those money changers and desecration happening again. He is going to see the sins of that city. What did Nehemiah do when he heard of the sins of the city? He wept and he prayed. As Jesus looks over the city He'll say "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem how often I would have gathered you as a hen gathers her chicks to herself but you would not. You stoned the prophets. Why will you die?" He will then walk into the city and see the money changers. As Nehemiah, in anger, the anger of the Lord not the anger of man which comes when God's glory is being assassinated, Jesus will drive the money changers out. The anger of man is when my objectives are being assassinated.

You see those walls that are all going to come down, in just a few short years He'll go outside of those walls and He'll go to a mountain called Calvary. At Calvary He'll pay for the sins of all of His people. He will build a wall that cannot be breached. It's the wall of your salvation. Our God is our fortress and our wall. Because of what He does at the cross those walls will come down and He'll give you a wall in which your secure forever in Jesus Christ so come to Him and then for Him joyfully, aggressively pursue a life that lifts Him up.

Do you know why Nehemiah kept saying 'remember me'? It was because for Nehemiah he understood he was saved by grace and that grace would transform him and as God looked upon his life he lived his life under the eye of God. He didn't live his life so that we would be talking about him. He didn't live his life so that the people of the city would adore him. He lived his life before the Lord which is why every time in this chapter he says 'remember me.' He cast himself upon God's grace. He lived his life under the eye of God. He understood he was right with God but he wanted the smile of God upon his life and his ministry. He abhorred the frown of God. He loved the smile of God and wanted the smile of God to be upon the people of God so he gave himself fully to the Lord and to the people.

That is the end of a revival. It's not a momentary experience. The objective is not revival. The objective is the glory of a Savior. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the time we could be together in Your Word. I thank You for this marvelous passage of Scripture, this call from Nehemiah 'remember me.' If you're reading this today there is that Savior that came to these walls and this city and then went

outside of it to save you and me from our sins. That's why we celebrate this marvelous Christmas season. A Savior has come, now would you come to Him? There was another man on that hill who said "Jesus remember me." Would you join that sinner, that criminal on that cross and say "Jesus remember me. I put my trust in You." If you would like to talk with someone about this decision please call us here at Briarwood. Jesus, I ask that You would do a work in our midst. Revive Thy work O Lord, not because we're looking for revival but we're looking to take the majesty of Christ into our lives and from our lives to this world. Lord, awaken our soul. Let not the walls of Your church come down. Let them be built up, the high and glorious wall where many find safety coming through the gate of salvation because Your people are alive and following Christ. They love Your Day, Your Word, the lost and Your praise. I pray this in Jesus' Name, Amen.