

XII. Nehemiah in Biblical Perspective
The Memoirs of Nehemiah—Arise and Build
“Gospel City Reaching”
Nehemiah 11
Dr. Harry Reeder
November 13, 2011 – Morning Sermon

We are in our twelfth study of Nehemiah in Nehemiah 11. We will cover by overview Nehemiah 11 through Nehemiah 12:26 but I'll just begin by reading the first couple of verses from Nehemiah 11. Here we are on this day of worship and the covenant has been renewed. It is the 24th day of the month leading to the praise of God and this is what is said in Nehemiah 11:1-2; *[1] Now the leaders of the people lived in Jerusalem. And the rest of the people cast lots to bring one out of ten to live in Jerusalem the holy city, while nine out of ten remained in the other towns. [2] And the people blessed all the men who willingly offered to live in Jerusalem.*

The grass withers and the flower fades. God's Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may this His Word be preached for you.

I have shared with you the burden of my heart. There are very few things in my life that I'm assured of outside of just preaching the Bible but this one in terms of the application of the Bible I'm absolutely assured of. My country is in great need and I have a heart for my country to be claimed for Jesus Christ. I long to see the very spheres of my country infected, affected and influenced with the Gospel but I know that's not going to happen unless there's life that comes back to the church of Jesus Christ. I meet many people who become very upset as they look at the affairs of our age – the assault on the sanctity of marriage, family and life, the coarsening of our culture. All of those things that once used to cause us to blush we now bold face sin against God.

While certainly there's a place of anger against sin this should not amaze you. Jesus has warned us of this. He has said, “In the world you will have tribulation.” In other words it's the world being the world. When the world does what it does boldly and without repentance, here's the message. It's not why does the world do better but the message is why isn't the church impacting the world? Why aren't we salt and light? Is it because we have lost the saltiness and the light? I believe the unchecked decent into the death spiral of sin that is in our culture is a direct indictment of the church. It is that we are spiritually impotent, Scripturally, Biblically illiterate and we have not grasped with our heart the heart of God for the glory of God. Oh we will say the right things and have Jesus as our helper to get through life but recently I read a quote from John Stott that I greatly loved. Stott said this before he died; (Here's the revival we need...) “If I could live my life all over again I'd live again for Christ. In fact if God would give me a thousand lives I'd live them all for Christ.”

It is not Christ simply into my life but living my life for Christ. We don't have believers that live that way because we don't have churches that call for that or minister that. There are various reasons why and that's why we're in need of revival. We're in desperate need of revival today and that's why I've chosen the book of Nehemiah for us to walk through because I believe Nehemiah is that great sign post that would later come to Jerusalem in Acts 2. It's a profile of what revival looks like among the people of God.

Nehemiah has stepped into this city. He saw that the walls were down and the reason for that was because the people were down. The walls needed to be rebuilt and so did the people. They needed revival and Nehemiah was called of God in which he set his mind to. He even used the rebuilding of the wall as an instrument to rebuild the people. So there is the rebuilding of the wall in the Nehemiah 1 through 6 and there is the rebuilding of the people in Nehemiah 7 through 13 where God is doing His work of revival. The wall has served its purpose. Now that God has built it up it's time to fill it up with the people that are alive unto the Lord who have repented of their sins and are pursuing Him. That is where his heart is right now. He wants it to penetrate every aspect. Nehemiah was called of that.

Today we get to see two things that Nehemiah did that are absolutely crucial for us to grasp strategically. When you see Nehemiah he is a leader but there is an unmistakable emphasis in chapter after chapter of this leader constantly multiplying and mobilizing other leaders throughout Jerusalem and throughout every aspect of Jerusalem. It's no clearer than it is right here in this text today. When Nehemiah goes to work he calls to the leaders to build the wall. When he goes to work the leaders are on the platform leading the people in worship and then the leaders lead the people in confession, repentance and consecration of the covenant renewal. The leaders sign their name to the covenant of renewal. He takes in this one book a chapter and a half to summarize the leaders that had been multiplied and mobilized in the city.

In other words, we're not going to see a nation that is claimed until the revival comes to the church. When revival comes to the church then God raises up His people and they provide the leadership that goes from city to city to city. The Gospel of Mark marks out the ministry of Jesus. Jesus first of all goes to a desolate place in Mark 1 for prayer and the word because no one can accomplish anything unless they're filled up to overflowing. He is filled up with the Father. The disciples come looking for Him and Jesus says "The point isn't that they are looking for Me but it's that we're looking for them. Arise let's go to the next towns."

It's interesting when man rebelled against God what did he do strategically? Man built a city with a tower. Its name was Babel. It was the very statement of rebellion against God as the people assembled against Him. Then God brings His disciplining hand and brings His work of grace. He sends His Son and then what does God do with the cities that are raised up as a statement of rebellion against Him? He sends His Son and the Gospel message to those cities. Jesus said "Arise, this is the reason I came. Let's go to the next towns." He goes city by city by city so how do we reach a city?

We have already seen that in the book of Nehemiah haven't we? God raises up a leader and the leader calls for the preaching of the Word and the prayers of God's people in worship. In protracted preaching and prayer God begins to bless and the first thing that happens is the people of God are revived. The first thing they do is confess their sins and repent of their sins. Then they renew the covenant relationship with the Lord and they set about in a whole new heart desire to move forward. That's a God sent, heaven sent revival. There's a big difference between a heaven sent revival and a man manipulated revival. A man manipulated revival is absolutely consumed with the experience of a revival but a heaven sent revival the people of God are pursuing the effects in the lives of other from the revival.

A heaven sent revival is a Christ exalting revival, a Spirit filled revival, a Gospel saturated revival and a sinner saving, life transforming, penetrating and permeating every segment of society, going from city to city to city, revival. This is how nations get claimed. It goes to cities because churches have been revived and then churches go after people. They produce leaders that go into every sphere of society. They multiply and mobilize them to move into every sphere of society and that's exactly what happens here.

The ESV study Bible has a picture of the city during the time of Nehemiah rebuilding the wall and what's not showing up on that is what it looked like inside the walls after they finished building the walls but the text tells you. In Nehemiah 7:4 it says *[4] The city was wide and large, but the people within it were few, and no houses had been rebuilt.* It was a city with walls that God had built and now God had called them to fill it. It was depopulated. Let's fill it up.

Here is one other word before we look at the text this morning. Jerusalem performs two functions for us as God is discipling us as His people from this text. Number one the city of God in the Old Testament was a type of and pointing to the church in the New Testament and the city of God was the capital of God's nation. The city of God was the focus of God's Kingdom in the Old Testament. As its pointing to the New Testament where God's Kingdom is going to be moving spiritually among all the nations of the world, the city of God, the core of the Kingdom, the embassy of God, the capital of the Kingdom is His church. So it is a marvelous way for us to focus on what we would like to happen to the church. Lord, rebuild Your walls. Lord, rebuild Your people. Revive us again in the midst of the years.

It's also as a city an example of how we go to the next towns. How do we reach the cities? How do we bring welfare to the cities? The people were put into exile and there they were in Babylon. There were prophets who said "The whole point for us to be in Babylon is to go over in a corner and build a wall around ourselves so that city of Babylon doesn't taint us." Jeremiah said "Oh no, God has put you in the city and He doesn't want that city in you but He wants you in that city. He doesn't want that world in you but He wants you in that world now you go bring welfare, My Good News, to the city and that will be your welfare when you do that."

How do we do that? First of all we can't bring Good News to the city until Good News has taken hold of us in the church but then strategically what do we do? Nehemiah gives us some information on this. I want to draw out four strategies from those couple of verses I read in Nehemiah 11. The first strategy is that leaders were throughout the city. Where were the leaders in Nehemiah? Nehemiah 11:1a says *[1a] Now the leaders of the people lived in Jerusalem.* They lived in the city. They were located in the city and were throughout the city. The second thing I want you to see is in Nehemiah 11:1b which says *And the rest of the people cast lots to bring one out of ten to live in Jerusalem the holy city, while nine out of ten remained in the other towns.* In other words, the city was unpopulated but the people were going to stay out there and not come to the city and they finally came to the city by casting lots when there were leaders in the city. When there were leaders in the city that drew the people to the city. In fact it says later they came willingly to the city.

There is a marvelous tithe back in Nehemiah 10. There was the covenant of renewal and one of the ways God has allowed us to show us we love Him with obedience is to bring the first born, the first fruits, the tithe to the Lord into the storehouse and watch

how God uses it. It is a statement of our love. We don't want to rob God we want to love God and we want to bring that in the act of worship to the praise of God. As we move to Nehemiah 11 the tithe just continues. What happens? You get a first fruits from all the other towns that are brought into the city – one out of every ten. There is a tithe. So the second thing is you have a tithe of all the people who were brought and willingly come to re-populate the city. So there is this gathering in, this picture of people being changed to where they want to live and what they're willing to do. They are willingly coming to the city.

Now look what happens in the Nehemiah 11:2, [2] *And the people blessed all the men who willingly offered to live in Jerusalem.* These people have had a change of mind so they leave where they are. As they come into the city the people bless the leaders and those that are there. With great joy they see God doing something to fill up His city that bears His name for His glory.

Then fourthly they identify city leaders and the surrounding cities. I commend to you the reading of Nehemiah 11 through Nehemiah 12:26 but I won't have time to read it all in this study. I will just sum it up for you by showing you the categories he brings to them. Nehemiah 11:3 says [3] *These are the chiefs of the province who lived in Jerusalem; but in the towns of Judah everyone lived on his property in their towns: Israel, the priests, the Levites, the temple servants, and the descendants of Solomon's servants.* Then he gives a list in Nehemiah 11:3-6 of the political leaders from all of the provinces. Nehemiah 11:7 says [7] *And these are the sons of Benjamin:...* Then he gives the tribal leaders of Benjamin in Nehemiah 11:7-9. Then he names the religious leaders in Nehemiah 11:10-14 and he starts out Nehemiah 11:10 by saying "Of the priests..." In Nehemiah 11:15-18 he names the Levitical leaders. Then he names the gate keepers in Nehemiah 11:19-21. Then he names the leaders of the Levites who are the overseers in Nehemiah 11:22-24. In Nehemiah 11:25 he identifies the cities that have all of their leaders within them that surround the city of God.

Then in Nehemiah 12:1-26 he enumerates all of the priests and Levites. Nehemiah 12:1 says [12:1] *These are the priests and the Levites who came up with Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua: Seraiah, Jeremiah, Ezra...* Remember Zerubbabel and Joshua the High Priest had led the people back earlier. So he names all the priests and Levites. All the way from Nehemiah 11 through Nehemiah 12:26 he is enumerating the political, economic, tribal, community and religious leaders. He is identifying all of these leaders and he is bringing them in front of you that are deployed in and throughout this city.

So what is God teaching us here? I want to give you three takeaways from this passage of Scripture in terms of when God brings a revival. That's the big thing, when God brings a revival. It's not the man manipulated one that's looking for a momentary experience but a heaven sent revival that is looking for the effect of Christ being exalted, being bathed in the Gospel, being filled to overflowing with the Holy Spirit, life transforming, sinner saving revival. It's not just looking for the worship service where I have a feeling. I'm not opposed to feelings. I believe when God brings revival it's intellectual, emotional, volitional and everything but it's not just looking for a feel good moment. It's looking for a filling up where Christ has now become my life where I can see life because I am leaving that mountaintop and going down in a valley where people are dying, broken and engaged in the insanity and treachery of sin, where Satan is

assaulting and sin is assassinating the glory of God. That is where I'm going and I'm not going to be on a mountaintop. There is the acid test of revival. What do God's people do then? That's the effect of a heaven sent revival.

What do they do when sin rises up like it would overwhelm us or foaming at the sin and would drown us or when it looks like a tsunami of sin would sweep everything away? Is there a rock? Is there an anchor that holds? It's revival that gives that moment in the lives of God's people. When that revival comes and we say "God help me reach this city with the Gospel, what is it that God would call us to intentionally do?"

Here's the first thing. When the Lord brings revival to His church, He will enable His church to intentionally multiply and mobilize incarnational leaders **for** the church **in** the city and **from** the church **to** the city. Incarnational leaders are those that live in the city among the people and they are leaders that raised up and multiplied for the church that it might impact the city and from the church and sent into the city. These leaders could include religious, political, economic, civic, community and all kinds of leaders who would begin to be multiplied in the church and sent.

This idea of multiplication of leaders is not something that Nehemiah has come up with. He is standing on the shoulders of Ezra and Ezra stood on the shoulders of Zerubbabel and Joshua but they didn't even come up with it. On the contrary let's go back all the way to Moses. When Moses finished what God called him to do and God called him home, did Moses leave a leadership vacuum? On the contrary there is Joshua and Caleb ready to take you to the next generation. It is the delivering power of God's grace. There are the elders of the tribes that he had trained and developed ready to take it to the next generation. Then there is Elijah and when he went home in such a glorious way did he leave a vacuum? No, here is Elisha and the school of the prophets where he had trained them. Then there is David. Here are the three chief men and the thirty mighty men. There is the Apostle Paul who died some death of persecution under Nero after the 60s around the first century but did he leave a vacuum? No there was Timothy, Titus, Luke, Aquila and Pricilla, and the leading women he trained everywhere he went.

In fact he took Timothy aside and wanted him to do what he did in multiplying and mobilizing leaders. Before he died and told Timothy to preach the word he gave Timothy an insight when he said "What you have learned from me in the presence of many witnesses I intentionally developed you as a leader, these things commit to faithful men. Now you go do the same thing and those people you are multiplying and mobilizing will teach others also." Do you see that pyramid of leadership development? This was Amway before Amway. So when Paul goes home there they are. When Timothy goes home here is a guy he trained and that's how it was done. The principal leader gives himself to proven leaders. They all invest in potential leaders. They all invest in possible leaders.

Why is that intentionality crucial? A Gospel Awakening that takes hold of a nation will only come from a revived church. In other words here is the way it has to happen. God from top down sends revival to His church. Then His church moves into the cities and as it comes to the cities it then bubbles up a Gospel Awakening as men and women are brought from the cities of this world to the city of God. It's called evangelism and discipleship. That's how it happens but how does it get to the next generation? It's when that generation that is experiencing the reviving work of the Lord intentionally trains the leaders to take the Gospel Awakening into every sphere of society and to the

next generation when they leave. They are intentionally mobilizing and multiplying leaders that will take the Gospel into every sphere of society, not just leaders in the church but leaders from the church into the city, into the world and into all of those places we need to go.

It is these multi-dimensional incarnational leaders. These are not people that go live in an ivory tower and write books. These are people that certainly read books and get alone with the Lord but they leave their tower and they live in the city. They go right into the midst of the city. They don't isolate themselves for the sake of purity. They say 'no' to the world. They don't want the world in them. They don't want the city in them but they are called to be in the city. You can't get away from this marvelous example of leadership in Nehemiah with Nehemiah's constant, Holy Spirit directed, information, revelation, and challenge to us everywhere you go. Do you build the city wall? You use leaders.

In fact, leaders were so important that there was one group whose leaders didn't show up. What group of people's leaders didn't show up when they were rebuilding the wall? It was the Tekoites. It was so important for leaders to show up that when they didn't show up he called them out. Then when the wall was built and it came time to worship what did he do? The leaders got onto the platform when the book was opened and the people rose in prayer and praise to hear the Word for hour upon hour upon hour. Then for 24 days the leaders led them in worship from that first day of the month for 24 more days. Then they gathered them together again and the leaders led in the confession of sin and repentance. The leaders led by signing the covenant of renewal. It is clear that he is bringing before us this strategic commitment of the church to intentionally develop leaders not only for the church but from the church into the world. It was that work that was done that caused others to be drawn from the cities into the city of God because the leaders were in the city. You could see what God was doing politically, religiously, economically and in the community because the revival was penetrating the entire city as the leaders were moving into it and taking it to the next generation.

You're probably thinking you know why I'm doing this. It's in the text, I'm with you but you're just excited about that fellows program that has started here. You really want us to see the importance of training leaders in the fellows program to go into every sphere of society. You're right. I'm not only excited about that but I'm excited about Campus Outreach because they're doing the same thing. YBL, Christian Medical Ministry and the Briarwood Youth Group are all going to do the same thing too where they will send out the leaders in this community.

I'm excited about you because this is what I want you to do when you finish reading this today. I want you to say "Pastor I want a heaven sent revival. I want to be Christ exalting, Spirit filled and Gospel saturated. I want my life transformed so that I can be a transformational agent in other people's lives. I want to be a leader for Jesus Christ that will take others to Christ in my community, neighborhood, and family. I want to seek the welfare of the street I live on, the business where I work, the organization I'm a part of." You are the leaders he is talking about here. Yes we have 119 ministries associated with this church and praise the Lord He will raise up leaders from them but it's also what YOU do.

Do you think leaders are made or born? I will answer that question once and for all. The answer is 'yes.' Leaders are born and leaders are made but Christian, effective,

incarnational leaders have to be born again and made through discipleship. They have to be born again not just born. They are not just made but they need to be made through discipleship. I want to tell you the best place that will happen and that's right in your home. Daddys and mommas need to make a decision. Do you want your child to rise up and have just enough Jesus to get through life or do you want to raise your child up who says 'Jesus is my life'? That's the decision you have to make. I want Christ to have my child and my child to have Christ and Jesus is their life even if Jesus gave them a thousand lives. Jesus would be their life. That's where it really begins is right there in the home. All these other things are instruments you can take hold of but they can't do it for you.

Don't miss Nehemiah 1:1 where it says Nehemiah was the son of Hacaliah. Nehemiah was born in a pagan nation in an exile with everything taken from him and he rose up as a man of God. The unspoken hero is Hacaliah, his daddy. That is the guy I want to meet. I will confess I want to meet Nehemiah too but I want to meet Hacaliah. So that is the ministry that comes forth. I have two more takeaways I want to give you in conclusion.

Secondly, when the Lord brings revival to His church, He will enable His church to bring a harvest into the city of God. In Acts 2 Jesus did this. Did Jesus raise up intentional leaders, mobilize and multiply them to go to the next towns? Absolutely. Here is Jesus, the seventy, the twelve and the three. Jesus ascends to heaven and He sends them to Jerusalem, then Judea, Samaria and the utter most part of the world. You see them go to Jerusalem, then Antioch, Ephesus, Lystra and Derby and then in Acts 17 they turned the world upside down. How did they do that? It was because Jesus intentionally multiplied and mobilized leaders who multiplied and mobilized leaders that took the Gospel from city to city to city and to the next city. They kept reproducing themselves.

These leaders that Jesus had invested in go to Jerusalem and stand up and they preach the Gospel saying "Jesus died for your sins. He came so that you could have everlasting life. He has ascended and now offers to you eternal life. This isn't something to get hold of to get by with, He has come to purchase you for you are His life." Peter said, "The One you have crucified has risen and He is ready to change you so come to Him, repent and live. All of you come unto Him." There are 3,000 and everyday people are being added. Then there is 5,000 and thousands upon thousands and it goes from city to city to city. Here is the tithe of the world. Here are the cities of the world being plundered by the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

It's not the casting of a lot that is bringing them into the city of God, it is the casting of the Gospel that is bringing them into the city of God. There is this wonderful harvest that is taking place and we begin to see that glorious output. Now churches begin to plant churches and revitalize churches leading people to Christ because they're alive and not dead. They are not in survival but they are in thrival. They are growing, alive and producing life where life is begetting life. The harvest is coming and now the city of God is being populated by those who are being brought from the cities of this world.

The third and final takeaway is when the Lord brings revival to His church with the blessing of Godly leaders and increasing population from the cities of the world into the city of God, the people of God will rejoice and praise the Lord of the harvest. Every time a soul is harvested from the cities of the world and brought to the city of God what

happens in heaven when that takes place? It's party time. The angels throw a party (Luke 15:7, 10). Have you ever had the privilege of having someone coming to Christ? Did it fill your soul? Did you rejoice? Did you bless the Lord because you know it wasn't you but the Lord that used you? It fills the people of God in a revived church as they see the harvest of souls and the multiplication and mobilization of leaders throughout society. It fills them with wonder and praise to God in rejoicing.

The moment where all of this is going to come to culmination is the glorious moment when the King of Heaven arrives and comes for His church. When He comes for His church, His church will rise up to meet Him on that day of that last great trumpet and as we rise up to meet Him we will bring to Him that harvest of souls that treasure that has been mined from the nations of the world. They are sinners that have been saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone for the glory of God alone and we will bring them to Him and give them unto Him because He is the One that saved them through us and our joy will be unspeakable in that day.

There are not only parties in heaven but it is party time here every time God rescues a sinner, every time God uses His church alive to beget life and then we are filled with joy. Oh how I long for that for you and me; that the joy of seeing sinners come to Christ through His church alive will fill this place again. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the time we could be together in Your Word. I am so grateful that You have ordained the Lord's Day, moments where we might worship You and then call upon You. Lord, revive Your church. Give us the harvest. Send the leaders and give us the ability walking in the life of Christ to intentionally multiply and mobilize those leaders that will influence every sphere of our society for this generation in the expansion of the Kingdom and for the generations to come. Father, begin in these homes that are represented here. Begin in our life that we would be leaders and Your laborers in the harvest. Father, we're not going to wait for others. We're going to pray for others. We will join others but we're not going to wait for them to come to us. There may be some of you who have heard the Lord of the harvest call you today through the faltering, failing, stumbling lips of this preacher that told you Jesus died for your sins. He has a glorious way of salvation but He's not a way He is The Way. There is no other life in the cities of this world but there is the city of God and He is ready to take you there. All you have to do is come and say "Jesus I come, a sinner, confessing, repenting. I long to be a leader and have that impact, I long to be a harvester but Jesus I have come to You for life this day." To help you in these first steps of your forever life please contact us at Briarwood Presbyterian Church. We're here with a great desire to walk with you all the way to Glory. Father, we turn our prayer and ask You to fill our hearts with a song again, the song of the glorious grace of the Lord Jesus that saves us and changes us. Then fill this place with that song and may that song be carried into every sphere of this society. Jesus, bring the harvest. We will rejoice in bringing it to You, but we will give You the praise for You have made the harvest. You're the Lord of the harvest. Praise Your Name, Amen.