

Sermon Title: **“The Prophetic Call: *Fasting & Prayer Activate the Kingdom*”**

Series: Foundations: *Learn, Live, and Lead*

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Text: Nehemiah 1-2

Introduction



“While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’ Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.” -Acts 13:2-3. In Christ it is never goodbye but see you later.

Transitions are hard, but at the Spirit’s leading, they can also be fruitful for the Kingdom and Glory of Jesus Christ. This world is not our home, we in Christ are here to take all of Jesus into all the world. *Together, we **learn** from Jesus, **live** like Jesus, and **lead** to Jesus.* **Foundations** is a final series of messages from my heart, as your Pastor, to you and the continuing ministry of Cornerstone Chapel. May the lamppost shine brighter and stronger for the Glory of Jesus Christ, His Spirit pouring out in greater stride. *And above all, through fasting and prayer, let us be the Body we are*

*purchased, resourced, and called to be- All of Jesus for all the world- **beginning with each of us!***

I. The Prophetic Call Believes! “I Didn’t Hear No Bell!” (Nehemiah 1:1-11)

“The words of Nehemiah the son of Hacaliah. Now it happened in the month of Chislev, in the twentieth year, as I was in Susa the citadel, that Hanani, one of my brothers, came with certain men from Judah. And I asked them concerning the Jews who escaped, who had survived the exile, and concerning Jerusalem. And they said to me, “The remnant there in the province who had survived the exile is in great trouble and shame. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates are destroyed by fire.” -Nehemiah 1:1-3 ESV

Jehovah Comforts. That is what Nehemiah’s name means in Hebrew. And this man and message come to a Nation that is scattered due to their *unfaithfulness* toward a God who is *faithful* to them- even in His judgment. Yet, in the same breath God speaks the reality of what devastation awaits those who turn from Him, and what healing and joy awaits those who turn to Him. There is no message with God that does not contain these two components. That is the Gospel. Yet, as the *prophetic voice* proclaims God’s faithfulness in judgment against sin, that same voice brings forth God’s faithfulness with Grace through repentance! **Only God can ring the bell calling something done or finished!**

“As soon as I heard these words I sat down and wept and mourned for days, and I continued fasting and praying before the God of heaven.” -Nehemiah 1:4

Surviving isn't living. Just because someone may survive a traumatic experience, this does not mean they are ok simply because they are alive. As Nehemiah hears news regarding the state of Jerusalem, he weeps and mourns for days. While this denotes a sense of sorrow due to the justness of God's judgment against Israel, he then also fasts and prays, showing his faith in the mercy and grace of this same God. We find in Paul the same heart found in Nehemiah here,

“They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises. To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen.”

-Romans 9:4-5

Nehemiah refused to believe that God was done with Israel. When he heard this news, he could not help but lament what could have been. Yet in this state of lamenting, he pursues resurrection for what may be in God for Israel. More than just a prayer or words, this is what it looked like for Nehemiah to step into his prophetic anointing.

“And I said, “O Lord God of heaven, the great and awesome God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, let your ear be attentive and your eyes open, to hear the prayer of your servant that I now pray before you day and night for the people of Israel your servants, confessing the sins of the people of Israel, which we have sinned against you. Even I and my father's house have sinned. We have acted very corruptly against you and have not kept the commandments, the statutes, and the rules that you commanded your servant Moses. Remember the word that you commanded your servant Moses, saying, ‘If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the peoples, but if you return to me and keep my commandments and do them, though your outcasts are in the uttermost parts of heaven, from there I will gather them and bring them to the place that I have chosen, to make my name dwell there.’ They are your servants and your people, whom you have redeemed by your great power and by your strong hand. O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of your servant, and to the prayer of your servants who delight to fear your name, and give success to your servant today, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man.”

-Nehemiah

1:5-11

Nehemiah, like others who came before him and after him, ***owns*** the sins of his people and offers them in ***confession*** to God. He then not only affirms God's justness in judgment against them, but also through the voice of the prophet Moses, affirms God's promise to gather those outcast back if they turn back to Him. God has always been the God of the repentant! In this reality of who God is amidst what He has done, Nehemiah intercedes on behalf of his people. Not only in confession, but in repentance and reaching out to experience the forgiveness and life a forgiving God can bring.

“Yet even now,” declares the Lord, “return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; and rend your hearts and not your garments.” Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and

he relents over disaster. Who knows whether he will not turn and relent, and leave a blessing behind him, a grain offering and a drink offering for the Lord your God?” -Joel 2:12-14

“Now I was cupbearer to the king.”

Who was Nehemiah? No one of significance when it came to who we would expect God to use to do what God did through him. Nehemiah as a book in our Old Testament was most likely written by Ezra, the Priest and Scribe, who had access to Persian records which would account for this story. I say this so that we realize, Nehemiah is you and me- everyday people in everyday professions, willing to be used of God as His prophetic voice. **Church renewal begins by recognizing that God wants to use you!**

I want us to embrace God’s invitation to look at churches that may be like Israel in Nehemiah’s day- yes, weep. But also, be about praying and participating in the resurrection from *what could have been* to *what will be*! Refuse to act as if the bell rung on any church, or person / relationship for that matter, until God rings it loudly and clearly! When we weep, we do not do so without hope! *Only Jesus removes candlesticks- Praise the Lord! Yet, realize Jesus does remove candlesticks!*

II. The Prophetic Call Sees His Vision Among the Rubble (Nehemiah 2:1-16)

“In the month of Nisan, in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, when wine was before him, I took up the wine and gave it to the king. Now I had not been sad in his presence. And the king said to me, “Why is your face sad, seeing you are not sick? This is nothing but sadness of the heart.” Then I was very much afraid.” -Nehemiah 2:1-2

Risk. Nehemiah intercedes prophetically for God to move through the King Artaxerxes. Nehemiah kept things professional with his job. Yet, the state of Jerusalem overpowered his professionalism and was noticed by the King. Does the state of our church affect us like this did Nehemiah? Does our faith lived out catch the attention of others? The King had a divine aid in recognizing this unusual state of emotion with his cupbearer. He quickly gets to the heart of the matter, and Nehemiah confronts his own fear. There was a **risk** to his own life if the King was not acting in accord to the vision Nehemiah had of God using him.

“I said to the king, “Let the king live forever! Why should not my face be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' graves, lies in ruins, and its gates have been destroyed by fire?” Then the king said to me, “What are you requesting?” So I prayed to the God of heaven.”
-Nehemiah 2:3-4

Prayer will never cease in the work of Kingdom Ministry. In fact, it is to be unceasing! The prayers through fasting, God’s Word, and the gathering of Saints greases the wheels of God’s Kingdom coming into this world! God will always lead us, provide above and beyond what we could fathom or even ask for, but drawing from His strength even in the moment keeps our hearts at a place of humility where He can use us! ***Not I, but Christ in me!***

*“So I went to Jerusalem and was there three days. Then I arose in the night, I and a few men with me. And I told no one what my God had put into my heart to do for Jerusalem. There was no animal with me but the one on which I rode. I went out by night by the Valley Gate to the Dragon Spring and to the Dung Gate, and I inspected the walls of Jerusalem that were broken down and its gates that had been destroyed by fire. Then I went on to the Fountain Gate and to the King's Pool, but there was no room for the animal that was under me to pass. Then I went up in the night by the valley and inspected the wall, and I turned back and entered by the Valley Gate, and so returned. And the officials did not know where I had gone or what I was doing, and I had not yet told the Jews, the priests, the nobles, the officials, and the rest who were to do the work.” -**Nehemiah 2:11-16***

Vision. Saints, pray for leaders who are not looking for easy. Pray for those who are willing to labor through the rubble at all hours of the night. Nehemiah inspected- he touched, felt, and relived these horrific final moments of a city that once was. Where the ease of riding ceased, Nehemiah went by foot. It was here that he beheld the work that God had called him too. Like the prophet looking at dry bones that would again live, Nehemiah beheld walls that would one day stand again. Yet, while the vision would come to him, and he would be a leading prophetic call toward this, everyone would need to have a hand in pursuing this renewing purpose of God.

We are not ahead of the Holy Spirit- we are not God's tools, but His children. He, as a good Father prepares us for His ordained works in and through our lives. God always provides us with what we need, including leaders who will lead us closer into His heart.

*“I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, so that I too may be cheered by news of you. For I have no one like him, who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare. For they all seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. But you know Timothy's proven worth, how as a son[e] with a father he has served with me in the gospel. I hope therefore to send him just as soon as I see how it will go with me, and I trust in the Lord that shortly I myself will come also.” -**Philippians 2:19-24***

III. The Prophetic Call Declares: Binding and Loosening (Nehemiah 2:17-20)

Nehemiah was tapping into the authority you and I have in Jesus today. *Binding and loosening.* Let me share the words of Jesus on this,

*“Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” And they said, “Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” -**Matthew 16:13-19***

Loosening. Nehemiah is seeking to *loosen* the plans and purposes of God through the King Artaxerxes. Praying to confirm in the moment follows the steady rhythm of praying and fasting that led him into this moment. He wasn't happy being prosperous in his life as cupbearer, but yearned for the kingdom prosperity only God could give to his family and nation. This led him to both pray and pursue God boldly- even at the expense of his own life.

“And I said to the king, “If it pleases the king, and if your servant has found favor in your sight, that you send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers' graves, that I may rebuild it.” And the king said to me (the queen sitting beside him), “How long will you be gone, and when will you return?” So it pleased the king to send me when I had given him a time.” -Nehemiah 2:5-6

Rebuilding. The king granted Nehemiah's request, and off he is sent with royal papers granting both safe passage as well as resources pledged to finance the effort. He was sent with the King's word and authority; and off he goes to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. Why the walls first? He answers this,

“Then I said to them, “You see the trouble we are in, how Jerusalem lies in ruins with its gates burned. Come, let us build the wall of Jerusalem, that we may no longer suffer derision.” And I told them of the hand of my God that had been upon me for good, and also of the words that the king had spoken to me. And they said, “Let us rise up and build.” So they strengthened their hands for the good work.” -Nehemiah 2:17-18

Shame came flooding in from the outside in, and to Nehemiah the first thing needed to be done was to stop the assault coming from the outside in. Recognizing the King and God were on their side, hands were strengthened, and all stepped up to participate in this good work of rebuilding the gates of Jerusalem. God was preparing Nehemiah as well as the people he would go and prophetically minister into.

Yet, when the Spirit of God moves to resurrect, the enemy will move to keep everyone dying until dead.

“Then I came to the governors of the province Beyond the River and gave them the king's letters. Now the king had sent with me officers of the army and horsemen. But when Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite servant heard this, it displeased them greatly that someone had come to seek the welfare of the people of Israel.” -Nehemiah 2:9-10

“But when Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite servant and Geshem the Arab heard of it, they jeered at us and despised us and said, “What is this thing that you are doing? Are you rebelling against the king?” -Nehemiah 2:19

Fear is leveraged to divide the people and stop the rebuilding efforts. Are you rebelling? Isn't that what got you into this in the first place- rebellion? You won't succeed- you won't change anything. Who are you trying to fool? Does any of this sound familiar to us? Remember, even though we survived something doesn't mean that we are alive. The shame sought to keep these people shackled. *However, Nehemiah came to proclaim deliverance!*

*“Then I replied to them, “The God of heaven will make us prosper, and we his servants will arise and build, but you have no portion or right or claim in Jerusalem.” -**Nehemiah 2:20***

Binding. As it is in the physical realm, so is it in the spiritual realm. The powers of the defeated kingdom of darkness, who ever seek to oppose God’s resurrecting plans of rebuilding, have not legal right- pastor, present, or future-within God’s Kingdom!

*“And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.” -**Colossians 2:13-15***

Understand what is happening here dear saints. In Christ, God has canceled the record of debt due against us because of sin. In Christ we are forgiven- there is no legal attachment sin has upon us. This doesn’t mean sin doesn’t try to cry out against us. It doesn’t mean that guilt and shame don’t try and throw mud at us. It means that nothing sticks; nothing is more powerful than Jesus’ authority in declaring us His now and forever.

*“For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.” -**Ephesians 3:14-21***

In this prophetic anointing Nehemiah had, we too must believe God’s Word and seek His Vision. We need to make this prophetic declaration over our lives against the things not of God or of His Kingdom that laboring into us. False words speaking lies to fuel fear, doubt, shame, and a returned submission to the shackles of sin. You have no portion or right or claim here, satan!

You have no portion in what I am inheriting in Jesus Christ!

You have no right to speak into my life against me, for Jesus Christ is for me!

You have no claim over my life, my marriage, my children- you are no longer my master! I belong to another who has ransomed me, called me His own, lavished His love upon me, and sings over me in His delight! I belong to Jesus and I plead His Blood and declare His Lordship over my life, my marriage, my family, my neighborhood, my job- His Kingdom is victorious and it continues to come!