

NEHEMIAH - A LIVING MESSAGE
FOR GOD'S PEOPLE TODAY

by

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Part One

END-TIME CONDITIONS

For some time past the Lord has been laying the message of this book upon my heart, and I believe the time has come for that message to be brought anew to His people. I believe that in this book there is that which can touch the need at this present time in a very real way; for, indeed, this is a time when the Lord's people need help to meet the many activities which are meant by the adversary to lead them away from, or prevent them from coming to, the place where the Lord has all that His heart desires in and through them. This first part will be occupied with a few general principles which govern the book.

The first is that this book represents an end-time activity. You know that this is the last fragment of recorded history before you reach the Gospel of Luke. Whether that has impressed you sufficiently I do not know, but it is indeed an impressive fact that the next piece of recorded history in the Canon of Holy Scripture, as we have it, is the Gospel of Luke. Thus what you have here, so far as the old dispensation is concerned, is an end-time activity. The content of this book represents what God did at the end of that dispensation, and will therefore foreshadow what an end-time activity of God is to be. It will show the kind of thing that the Lord will do in the end-time.

And then the other thing, which goes along with it, is that the Book of Nehemiah is related throughout to the Coming of the Lord. Luke brings in the Lord Jesus in a very immediate way, and we find Him in the temple surrounded by the few who represent the remnant which has come over from the old dispensation and which takes up the testimony in the new - for the testimony was indeed represented by a very few when the Lord Jesus came; Simeon and Anna and a few others who looked for the consolation of Israel, for the Lord's Christ. They are found there with the Lord in His House in the Gospel of Luke, and as that is the next fragment of history, and as Nehemiah was the last before that, you will see that the link with Nehemiah is the Coming of the Lord.

Putting these two things together, you have your foundation laid for the abiding value of this book. It is an end-time activity related to the Coming of the Lord.

Now we go to the book, and in a few further observations we take note of what we might call the typology of this book, that is, its typical elements and features. Indeed, we have to link another book with it, for the two are one. These are Ezra and Nehemiah, and in the Hebrew Scriptures they were not separated, but one was regarded as the completion of the other. In Ezra, as we know, we have the House of God in view; in Nehemiah we have the enclosure, the wall of Jerusalem; and these two speak to us of the testimony of the Lord as here on the earth.

The Divine Order: the Altar; the House; the Wall

In Ezra we find the order introduced. The first feature of the order of things is the setting of the altar, the great altar, in its place: "And they set the altar in its place" (Ezra 3:3; A.R.V. margin). Then after the altar was put in its place, the House of God was built; then when the House was built, at a subsequent time the wall was re-built. This is the three-fold order. First we have the altar, which typifies the Cross, as being basic to the whole Divine activity, and then the House, which typifies the Church, as resultant from the Cross being in its place. It is important to have the aspect of things as well as the order. The House is here presented in its Godward direction, what it is to God, and what it is in itself. And then the wall is the testimony manward, towards the world. That is the order and

the aspect of things. Let us gather them up again very briefly: the Altar - the Cross, basic to the whole Divine activity; the House - the Church, resultant from the Cross, issuing therefrom, in its Godward aspect and as to what it is in itself; and then the Wall as the testimony of the Cross and the House, outwardly, toward man and the world.

The Cross - Basic Victory

You will have noted that the Cross is here seen as a basic deliverance from all hostile forces. That does not mean that the hostile forces cease to be, or cease to trouble. They are not annihilated by the Cross, they are very much in evidence afterward. But there is a factor about the Cross here which represents basic deliverance from the hostile forces. Ezra 3:3, tells us that they put the altar in its place: "... for fear was upon them because of the peoples of the countries". So that their fear of the peoples led them to that step. Working the other way it meant, or implied, that the Cross - the altar - was the ground of their security, their safety, and their deliverance from the hostile peoples round about. The Cross is basic to deliverance. The forces will not cease to trouble; the antagonism of the enemy will not become a thing of naught; there may be a good deal of challenging, pressing and assailing, but there is that basic thing in the Cross which speaks of security, safety and deliverance. By the Cross, says the Apostle, He triumphed: "having put off from Himself the principalities and the powers, He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it (His Cross)" (Colossians 2:15; A.R.V. margin). You have the basic thing in the Cross.

The House - Heavenly Order

The House sees a heavenly order set up in the Lord's people. That is the resultant work of the Cross, the issue of the Cross, because until the Cross has done its work nothing heavenly can be brought in. The Letter to the Ephesians sees us in the heavenlies, where we have been quickened together with Him, and raised, and seated; but quickening has to do with none but those who have died. So that the Cross sees an order of the earth and of man set aside; and, therefore, the House of God, coming in after the Cross, represents a heavenly order, not of man, set up in the Lord's people.

The Wall - the Testimony Outward

Then the wall determines the testimony of the Lord, the divide as to the world, and as to mere professors. If I were asked to define the testimony here I should say that it is the testimony of what is in resurrection. These walls were "raised again". They speak of that which is brought back from destruction, disintegration and death, and reconstituted. But they are in association with the heavens in a marked way, and the feature which they represent pre-eminently is that of distinctiveness. It is a distinctiveness of testimony as represented by what is raised, what is in resurrection. There is a tremendous difference between that and what has died, what has been and is no more. The testimony of resurrection life and nature is something very distinct. So the wall represents distinctiveness of testimony as characterized by what is risen and of the heavens.

Now having said all that in a general way as introductory, we are able to go on with the book more fully, and we shall take as our first matter of consideration things as they were when Nehemiah came to Jerusalem. We shall follow afterward with Nehemiah himself as the vessel of recovery, and then after that with the way of recovery. But I think that we may not get much beyond the summarizing of "things as they were". Each feature, I am sure, will in itself be very challenging to our hearts, and to our day.

I would like to say here, by way of parenthesis, that it is not for one moment my desire merely to accumulate truth or Bible matter for the sake of an address, a theme, but very truly that the Lord may be able at this end-time to get that which He is after, and that as we speak of these things the Holy Spirit may strike them home to us in relation to His own purpose.

Things as They Were

Now, coming back to this book, and reading it through and marking the things which represented the conditions in Nehemiah's time, you will find that there is presented a very deplorable state of affairs. In the first place, the clear testimony of the House of God has broken down. The things resisted by Ezra have recurred and revived. That beautiful movement which is presented in Ezra's account, that recovery of truth as to the House of God; that putting away of things which were contrary to that testimony and that House, has all collapsed and the old evils have raised their heads again; the testimony is in a state of weakness and ineffectiveness.

As we read through the book of Nehemiah with Ezra in the background, having Ezra freshly in mind with all that is there, we shall be startled and amazed that here in the day of Nehemiah such things were unrecognized, only coming to light when Nehemiah comes on the scene to do something which is according to God's mind. It is always like that. You never know what there is of evil and of that which is contrary to God until you come out in some whole-hearted purpose for God, and then you discover things that you would not have believed to be existent before. These things are quiescent, they are hidden, they are going on quietly, holding and gripping the life of the people, destroying the testimony of the Lord, and they only spring into manifest life and activity when something positive for God comes into the midst.

Oppression

Look at some of these things. Many of the Lord's people (speaking historically here, we should say the Jews) had been sold into slavery among their own brethren. The Lord's people were making merchandise of one another, were seeking their own good and gain at the expense of their brethren, maintaining their own position by the humiliation and degradation of their own brethren; and I am very far from sure that that has not a spiritual counterpart. I do not know what some people would do if they had not others over whom they could lord it, and were not able to turn even God's heritage to their own good and account. This works out from simple forms to extreme forms. It may work out in the simple form of that unholy, unlovely criticism amongst the Lord's people, which after all only implies that we are better than they, and bolsters us up at their expense. I wonder how much of our criticism of one another does not secretly have that motive.

Oh, that eternal, everlasting 'but'; always a reservation! 'You know they love the Lord, but...': 'They are very zealous for the Lord, but...': 'There is all that is good about them, but'; and that 'but' looms bigger than all the good, and undermines all the good.

So many of us who use that 'but' are only prompted to do so by our superior judgment, by our pride. I mean this, that too often we get on top by making others appear small; and we gain, or seek to gain, our prominence, our position, our influence by that form of pride which does harm to the children of God. That may be a simple illustration of this thing spiritually.

The whole force of the exhortations of the New Testament is in the other direction. The emphasis is that we should put others above ourselves, that we should always be esteeming others better than ourselves. That is the opposite direction. That is very hard for the flesh to do, and you see why we have to stress the fact that if the testimony of a heavenly thing in the House of God is to be maintained in fullness and clearness, the Cross has to come first and to go right to the root of this pride, this arrogance, this subtle self-sufficiency, self-esteem, this "humble" (?) criticism of ours which, after all, is the very essence of pride; and it may show itself in many other ways, as indeed it does; lording it over God's heritage; taking position and making the very privileges and opportunities of service the occasion for our position.

To put that in another way, in the New Testament form, it is this: the disciples, before they were baptized with the Holy Spirit were men who were always looking out for an opportunity of being on top of their brethren, and of having the advantage over one another, having first place; and the Lord Jesus had to say to them strong words: "I am among you as He that serveth"; "... the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister..." That is the spirit of the Cross. Now I think you can see that there is undoubtedly a spiritual counterpart to this, where others are made the means of our gain, where we in a spiritual sense sell our brethren into slavery for our own advantage. You may follow that further if you desire.

Insolvency

Another thing which comes out in this book is that many of the Lord's people, the Jews, were living in insolvency, partly by reason of mortgages, or by the selling of their sons and daughters into servitude. That is to say, they were not living in their own rights. They were reduced to poverty and they had no resources of their own; therefore dignity and honour were absent, and they were a debtor people.

That also has a spiritual counterpart. I wonder, beloved, how far it is true of ourselves, and of many of the Lord's people today, that they are not living in their own title; that, were things brought to the balance, they would be found insolvent. To put it more simply, how many of us know in ourselves the riches of Christ, and how many of us are in that false position of having to live upon other people's riches? I mean this, that if all the external things of spiritual help were stripped off; the meetings, and the fellowship, and all these things were taken away, how many of us would discover that we were living in our own title and, in the last analysis, absolutely independent of all such things? While we may enjoy them, profit by them, thank God for them, yet it is not things on the outside which constitute our life, it is our own knowledge of the preciousness of the Lord, and, though everything of the outside be stripped from us, we are solvent, we can stand up and say: 'Yes, but you cannot take away my own heritage; I have a heritage in Christ which is not dependent upon meetings, conferences, addresses, or upon anything on the outside, but which is my own inward life with the Lord; I know Him'.

It may just be the case in the end-time, beloved, that the Lord will call many of His people to face situations like that for their own discovery, their own finding out. I am quite sure that the Lord will require at the end-time, that every child of His shall know Him in a personal, inward way to his own sufficiency and satisfaction in Christ. And that although outward things may be removed, may collapse, may disappoint, we find fullness in Christ for ourselves.

Are you solvent? Are you mortgaged? Are you living entirely upon what other people have to give you? Is that your sustenance? Or, are you living upon what you get from the Lord? If so, if you have something as your own, you will have something to give, and you are not in the state of beggary, poverty, such as these people were in. I am so glad that Nehemiah redeemed the people who were sold into slavery, and bought them back into their own rights. I am so glad that Nehemiah stopped this business of mortgaging and selling their children to maintain their own lives, and saw to it that every man could stand on his own feet before God, and pay his own way. That is an important spiritual reflection for the Lord's people, and that represents an end-time movement, for we have lived far too long upon mere externals of grace, and far too little upon what the Lord Himself is to us.

The House of God Defiled

Then the temple had been polluted by the heathen and had been used for secular purposes. I think that hardly need be applied, the two things go together. When those who are not of pure blood by direct birth from above, heathen in this sense that they are not born children of God, come into the House of God, and have a place amongst the Lord's people, you very soon find that the House of the Lord is turned in the direction of interests and usages which are altogether contrary to the mind of the Lord. It is brought down to earth; the House of God is made an earthly thing, drawn out of its place. The enemy is always trying to do this. It is his persistent strategy to insinuate amongst the Lord's people those who are not really born again, those who assume and presume; who would come in as of the Lord's people, but who are not the Lord's people; and the issue of their presence is to introduce into the House of God worldly judgments, worldly methods, man's ways, man's thoughts, and so pull it down on to the lower, the carnal level of life. That is persistently, and too often successfully, attempted as one of the Devil's master-strokes. Surely we see that today, for it is very widespread. You hardly need to be told that; we are aware of it all round.

But Nehemiah, as representing God's end-time movement, put a stop to that. He purged the House of God of the heathen, and saw to it that the House of God was maintained according to God's thought, and that man's thought and man's way was ruled out. No one thinks, of course, that I am talking about the House of God in any material sense, of churches and places where people gather. That may be an application of this; but I am thinking of the people of God, who are called to be for Him a heavenly people; into the midst of whom the enemy is constantly trying to get carnal principles, natural activities and energies to pull this testimony down from the heavenlies and make of it an earthly thing run by man. Nehemiah will not have that; he counters that, and so, represents what God will have at the end-time.

The Sabbath Violated

Then again, the Sabbath was neglected. This is an extraordinary thing after Ezra, is it not, that the Sabbath should have fallen out of its place, be neglected, set aside, overlooked, ignored. Let us hasten at once to say that we are thinking now of the spiritual and New Testament counterpart of this; not of a day. While we do still thank God for the Sabbath day as a point of time here, and while we would cling to it and not let it go easily, we have been lifted in our understanding of this to a much higher level, and we have come to see that the Sabbath is the historical type of the end of God's works when He enters into His rest in the Lord Jesus; that the Sabbath speaks of a full accomplishment of all God's work in the Person of His Son. Set aside, overlook, ignore the finality of Divine activity in Christ, and you have lost your rest, you have lost your peace; you are still

wandering in a circle in a wilderness; you are still in the realm of the imperfect and unaccomplished; you have not yet come to settle down on that ground which proclaims the word "It is finished".

The soul that really apprehends spiritually the finished work of Christ, is a soul at rest; it has entered into God's rest. It is delivered from the tyranny of the Devil who is always seeking to bring accusation and condemnation, despite the fact that the finished work of Christ says there is no condemnation. All this restless, feverish introspection, self-analysis, self-encompassing; never at rest, never settled, never sure, never certain of anything; all this is because the Sabbath has been overlooked. For us the Sabbath is a Person and not a day, and therefore every day should be to us a Sabbath. That is the deepest meaning, I am sure, of this magnificent word which we all quote as a fragment of Scripture, a text, "The joy of the Lord is your strength".

What is the joy of the Lord? "God... rested from all His work..."; "God saw everything that He had made, and behold it was very good"; and that all-inclusively is Christ in His full work by His Cross. God has looked upon the new creation in Christ and said: "It is good". "The joy of the Lord is your strength". The finality of God's satisfaction is in Christ. Overlook that, miss that, and you have lost your Sabbath rest, your rest of heart. That is how it was here. But Nehemiah brought that back, and an end-time movement represents the recovery of the finality of Christ's work, the fullness of His satisfaction to the Father, and the people of God being brought into that. Oh, beloved, the importance of that can never be overestimated, because against that the adversary is dead set.

I see two movements as marking the end-time, and they are these. On the one hand, the enemy is trying to rob the people of God of their rest, assurance, peace, certainty, confidence, and circling them round with doubts, fears, apprehensiveness of things, to cut the ground of confidence from under their feet - the Accuser of the brethren comes out in that way at the end-time in an intensified form. Over against that, God would bring back the fullness and finality of His work in Christ, set His people in their Sabbath rest, directing their hearts toward Him, saying: "This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased": 'You are accepted in Him, I am satisfied'. It is all in Him. Bring back that testimony of the Lord Jesus at the end-time, and it is a great countering factor. "Nehemiah", be he a man or be he a corporate instrument for recovery at the end-time, must have as a part, an important part, of his ministry the establishing of the Sabbath in this sense.

Mixture and Lost Distinctiveness

Then, again, we find here that many of the Lord's people had married foreign wives and thus their distinctiveness was lost. Nehemiah destroyed those unions, and compelled such as had thus transgressed to send back their wives to their own homes and countries, thus upholding a Divine principle. Now the spiritual counterpart is not that those who have unconverted husbands or wives should leave them, or neglect them, though I am afraid that many are doing that. Because the husband or wife has not the things of the Lord, the interests of the Lord at heart, they go out to many meetings and leave them alone. Do not fall into that trap. No, the spiritual counterpart is that these wives in the Old Testament always represent principles. Women, as we know, throughout the Bible are types of principles, and what is here typified is alliance, and relationship, and association with principles which are foreign to what is wholly of God; and any voluntary association with those principles destroys that spiritual distinctiveness which must ever characterize the Lord's people.

That covers a very wide area and includes innumerable things, but that is the inclusive application of this. What we have here is an element, a feature, a principle, a law that is contrary to the revealed will of God, which is foreign and alien to the mind of the Lord, to the Word of God, to the way of the Spirit; what is in view here is a voluntary association with that, an allowing that to come into relationship with ourselves. As the result of such a course, there will be an offspring which is a mixture, which has a mixture of things of God and things of the enemy; and if there is one paramount abomination to God as revealed in the Word of God it is mixture.

Everywhere God is against mixture. God will have things utter, complete, absolute, clearly defined, wholly of Himself; and this wall of Nehemiah represents the mark which divides between what is wholly of God, and what is not of God; it is not just a matter of the different shades and degrees of what is not of God, but what is not of God to the finest degree. What is inside is to be of God to the very last measure, and anything that is not of God has no place there. And so these wives must be expelled from that area and sent away. It is a spiritual principle which is in view. God is against mixture. There is a terrible amount of mixture amongst the Lord's people.

Suburban Christians

There are, perhaps, two other things to be mentioned. The majority of the people we find here were living outside Jerusalem, in the suburbs, and Nehemiah had not enough people in Jerusalem for the work in hand, and had to appeal to them, encourage them, exhort them, to go out to bring others in. That is a very simple thing in its spiritual interpretation, and yet an important thing. There are a good many of the Lord's people living in the spiritual suburbs; who are not right inside His testimony. They may be only a little way out, but they are out; they may be a long way out. There may be all manner of - shall we say - reasons which they would give. Some would say that they did not want to be singular, they did not want to seem to be unbalanced, they want to keep the balance of things. Yes, all kinds of reasons (?) would be advanced. It may be prejudice, it may be suspicion, it may be keeping on the safe side of the road, it may be fear of the cost, unwillingness to pay the price. It may be that Sanballat and Tobiah will look unfavourably at them if they come inside and co-operate with Nehemiah. It may be that they are not quite sure about this thing; they want to see how it is going to fare, if it is going to succeed, and if they see the thing is solid ground they will take the risk! There is no risk if the thing is solid, and therefore there is no heroism and no honour.

You see what I mean. When the Lord does a new thing, and the Lord is seeking to have His utter testimony to what is altogether of Himself and of heaven, where man, in the flesh, in nature, has no place, a thing which is wholly of the Lord, it involves cost, loss of favour, loss of friends; it involves misunderstanding, misrepresentation; it involves in criticism, in the judgments of being extreme and singular and different from everyone else; all that! Yes? Well, what of it? The issue is, are you going to be wholly in with God, or are you going to remain in the suburbs? Nehemiah would urge, would exhort, would entreat, would encourage, would reach out, would call in; and blessed be God! there was a response adequate to the need. It remains for us to decide in our own hearts, whether we are on the fringe of things, on the outskirts, on the rim, or whether we are right in, and taking the consequences of such a position; and we shall just have to square right down to this issue.

Some of us have had to do that. We had seen what it would involve, what it would cost; at least we had seen a good deal of the inevitable practical outcome

of taking that course with God. Yes, but the issue has just been this: "Was it the way of the Lord?" If so, to be out of it could not pay in the long run; whatever we might have for the time being, it must be lost sooner or later.

Certainly we must not view things merely upon that low level - gain and loss - but after all it is the question of what we are here for - for the Lord, or for ourselves? For the Lord, or for others? The whole question is, "What does the Lord want?" Then, it may be costly, it may mean much, it may mean loss of fellowship in many directions, loss of favour, and we may be involving ourselves in the terrific animus - hostility - of the enemy; but what can we do? We must go on with God. Are we all at that place? That is bringing things very close to our hearts, is it not?

Official Obstruction

Then, in closing; all these things which we have mentioned as being the wrongs, the evils, which Nehemiah encountered; which existed, but of which no notice was taken until he came on the scene, all these things were supported by an important, influential and official class, priests and nobles, and even the high priest himself was a party to them. Nehemiah came right up against that. Well, it is quite true that, when we determine to go right on with the Lord, it is the official element that obstructs. We meet an influential force, we come right up against those who have place and position and we find too often that, like the high priest, even those who officially represent, and are accepted as the representatives of God's highest interests are not favourable toward the whole counsel of God, the whole purpose of God, but condone things which are altogether contrary to His full testimony. That is very true. Some of you have proved it, and will know it if you determine to go right on with the Lord.

But Nehemiah met it all, and he met it with courage. "Then I contended with the nobles", he said. He did not grovel before the influential class, he did not bow to the official elements; he contended with the nobles. He knew that he was a man with a Divine mandate, and that gave him spiritual, not merely natural, dignity amongst men, because as he stood upon his Divinely-given ground, to fulfil his Divinely-given ministry, he knew that God would stand by him.

We shall see there were other factors in the background which made him the man he was; but that was his attitude. It is a great thing to know you are in the purpose of God. You have great confidence when you know you are in a Divine activity; that the thing you are in was not initiated by you, but came from heaven, and you came into it from heaven, spiritually; the thing is of God. It puts you in a position of moral and spiritual ascendancy, and gives you a dignity above that of men whose dignity is merely official, and not spiritual.

Now you have been making your application as we have gone along. We must come back and see this instrument of recovery, and the method of recovery more fully. I do trust that the Lord will enable you to see that we are in an end-time, related to the Coming of the Lord, and that an end-time activity is the raising of a testimony of distinctiveness, that is, that which is in resurrection life and power, a thing all of God, with nothing of man in it. And that testimony demands that a very great deal that is contrary to it shall be dealt with and put away.

Part Two

THE CHARACTER OF THE LORD'S VESSEL OF RECOVERY

Reading: Isaiah 58: 6-14.

We come now to the second thing, the vessel of recovery; for it is the recovery of the full and complete testimony according to God's mind which is represented by the work of Nehemiah, especially the recovery of the testimony of God toward the world and men.

Typical Significance of Nehemiah and Ezra

Let us repeat this general word, that what we have in Ezra and Nehemiah is the testimony of God concerning His Son Jesus Christ, and that, in a threefold way. The testimony concerning the Cross, in the altar; the testimony concerning the Church, in the house; and the testimony to the world, to the nations; to men, as in the wall. So that it is Christ at the centre and Christ at the circumference. It is the fullness of Christ from centre to circumference that is here; and as to the wall particularly. It represents the defining as to what is of Christ, and what is not of Christ; as to what is according to God's Son, and what is not according to God's Son; for the wall is the boundary, the line of demarcation as to what is inside of the testimony of Jesus, and as to what is outside of that testimony. Those are general remarks to help you grasp the whole import of this book.

Nehemiah - the Man

Having said that, we come to this second factor of the vessel of recovery - the man, Nehemiah. You will, of course, be remembering that Nehemiah is a representation. What he was in his day is what God seeks to be possessed of at the end of this age; not, perhaps, in one outstanding individual, although there will be an individual ministry in this respect, but more especially in a corporate instrument, a company, by which the Lord will recover this full testimony concerning His Son. So that what is said of Nehemiah has its application to such an instrument at any time when that instrument is brought into being by the Lord for His purpose.

It is helpful and useful to recognize the difference that there was between the two men who represented this movement of God, Ezra and Nehemiah; and there was a difference. I think we might describe the difference somewhat in this way: Ezra was more of the character of a priest, while Nehemiah partook more of the features of a prophet. If you let your mind dwell upon the Word in those two connections you will understand what I mean. Ezra was a quieter man than Nehemiah, perhaps a more restful man than Nehemiah; you might say that he was a gentler man than Nehemiah.

Spiritual Energy

Nehemiah was rougher; he was a man marked by action - prompt and energetic action. Ezra seems to have been more marked by thought - not that he was not a man of action; but if there was a difference in these two men, Nehemiah was a man of action rather than of thought, more than was Ezra.

Now Nehemiah, toward the Lord's people, was kind and considerate; hospitable and encouraging; and always sought to be helpful; but towards Divine interests, and spiritual principles, and enemies of those interests and principles, he was uncompromising; zealous and jealous; strict and prompt; there was no getting

round him. We mention this because it marks a Divine aspect of things. The different types are required for different aspects of the Divine purpose; certain features belong to certain points of progress in what God is doing.

For Ezra to be a builder of the House and an adorer, an embellisher of the House, demands a quietness. So in him we see a passiveness, if you like, a love which buildeth up. But when it comes to the question of foreign, alien, mixed, and inimical elements having impinged upon the things of God, and having brought the testimony of God into ruin and disrepute; and when it is a matter of meeting the forces which are set dead against the Name and the honour of the Lord, then you have moved from the first chapter of Ephesians into the last chapter; you have gone from the love which buildeth up, to the warring in the heavenlies, and you have different features developed. Thus a Nehemiah character comes in for such a phase.

You see that in the taking up of the Lord's interests in a day when the forces of evil are dead-set against those interests and that testimony, the Lord has to develop warring elements and characteristics in His instrument, and so a Nehemiah is not such a mild man as an Ezra. Now that lies on the surface, that is perfectly patent, but it does bring to us again an emphasis upon what the Lord needs right at the end, when we are peculiarly up against the forces foreign to the Lord's interest; which are seeking to undermine, under-cut and work the destruction of His testimony; which have already obtained a hold, as we have seen in those nine things which we mentioned. So that is Nehemiah. Vigour, downrightness is required in a day like this.

There is a mildness, which passes by the name of love, which may do a very great deal of harm to the testimony. It allows many things to abide in secret, under cover; things which are working positively against the Lord's testimony, and smothers them over with what we call love and forbearance, when a Nehemiah is needed to chase them away. Regarding one who transgressed he says: "... I chased him from me". He did more than that, as some of you recall. Ezra and Nehemiah need not of necessity represent different times, but only different phases of responsibility in relation to the Lord's interests.

A Heart-Burden

As we look more deeply into Nehemiah's heart, we find that he was a man who had a great heart-burden. He carried on his heart very heavily the interests of the Lord and His testimony. His brother, Hanani, had come to him in his far-off exile, and reported the state of things at Jerusalem. That is how the book opens, and Nehemiah himself tells us how that report affected him. "And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days; and I fasted and prayed before the God of heaven, and said..." There is a great heart-burden. That heart-burden is first of all borne in the presence of God alone.

Then out from the presence of God he carries that burden, and it becomes apparent that this man has a concern. In spite of himself, in spite of what was expected of him, in spite of what was unlawful before men, his heart-burden betrays itself. "Now I was cupbearer to the king. And it came to pass... that I took up the wine, and gave it unto the king. Now I had not been beforetime sad in his presence. And the king said unto me, 'Why is thy countenance sad, seeing thou art not sick? this is nothing else but sorrow of heart.' Then I was very sore afraid, and I said unto the king, 'Let the king live for ever: why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' sepulchres, lieth waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire?'" (Nehemiah 1:11; 2:1-3; A.S.V.). That is enough to show us this further thing as to the nature and the

condition of a vessel to be used by the Lord in recovering His full testimony, the testimony concerning His Son. That vessel, that instrument is one, and must be one, upon whose heart a condition of things so clearly contrary to the thought of God genuinely lies with very great pressure. We have shown of what order this burden of Nehemiah's was.

It is one thing, beloved, for us to get a kind of public concern about things and then begin to make a great noise about it amongst men; to advertise, to demonstrate, and to give it a public form in utterance and effort and organization; to join ourselves to some cause, or to join some cause to ourselves, and then in that cause to make a great big affair of it: that is one thing. And that may have all manner of elements which just fall short of that which is essential and necessary from the Lord's standpoint. It is one thing to come to a situation from the outside, and link ourselves on with it, and take it up, and make it our work for life, our life-interest; it is quite another thing for the Lord to put into our hearts, in secret, an almost unbearable, intolerable burden which is His own heart-burden, and for us first of all to bear that thing secretly in the presence of God upon our hearts in a deep out-pouring of travelling prayer; quite another thing to come to the Lord's interests in that way.

There are plenty of people whom you could get interested in a cause; whom you could get to take up a piece of work requiring help, but it is another thing to have that spiritual fellowship with God which results in God putting His travail into your own soul. The difference is that in the one instance the thing is something objective; we come along and interest ourselves in it, take it up; but it is apart from us. It has our interest, it has our energy, it has our resources, but it is something objective to ourselves. It is a piece of work, a movement, a testimony - using that word in a technical sense.

The other thing is this: before the Lord we take responsibility. Do you notice that "we" in chapter 1, verse 6? Nehemiah is a part of this and this is a part of him. You notice how, all the way through, in dealing with this matter he uses the word "we". He is apart from the whole thing, that is, he has not accepted the conditions; he is not responsible for the state of things; he certainly repudiates the whole thing, and does not for one moment agree with it, and yet he is in this thing as though he were responsible for it; as though God could lay it all at his own door. The thing has come so near to his own heart that he does not stand here and the situation there, but he finds himself as one with it. It is his own burden, and he takes the thing in responsibility upon his own shoulders before God in prayer, and prays vicarious prayer over this situation. That is being on the inside. If the man himself had been personally responsible for the destruction of Jerusalem, the wreckage of the walls, and the awful moral condition of the people of God there; if he had been one who had brought it all about, he could not have taken this thing more to heart. He is like a man who is convicted of being responsible for it all.

Not a Profession but a Passion

We shall have more to say about that later, but that is enough for the moment to see what kind of vessel the Lord must have to do things. He does not want "workers" to take up His work; He wants travaillers to travail with Him for His spiritual interests. He does not want employees, He wants sons. He does not want experts, He wants those who have a passion; those to whose heart the whole thing comes so clearly that it bends them down before Him in an anguish; who are so much in the matter that it is their matter before God; it is theirs. It is no mere mental apprehension of teaching and of truth; it is a heart-burden, a

desperate concern for the Lord, because of things as they are spiritually amongst His people.

Are we exercised like that? Are we moved like that? Are we in things like that? Have we taken up work for the Lord, associated ourselves with some cause; or have we come with God's own burden and travail in our souls - this thing to us is a thing which saps our life; for which we are pouring out our very blood, the thing which costs everything, and yet we can do no other; there is no question of resigning, giving up, the thing is ourselves? God must have something like that at the end for His purpose, and I think if we said no more, that is a challenging word to our hearts.

Oh, let us wipe the slate of all these other ideas of organizing something, running something, getting a movement going. Let us see that God brings this into being out of travail. He baptizes a soul into an anguish; He throws upon some one man, or some little company, the mantle of His own terrible disappointment, dissatisfaction and grief because of things as He sees them spiritually amongst His own people.

That is how God brings things into being. Men do it in other ways, but that has always been God's way. It has cost the instrument its life every time. That does not necessarily mean that the instrument has died a sudden death, or even laid down its life in martyrdom; but it has cost the instrument its life. Are we in things like that?

Such is Nehemiah. We are seeing into the inner secret history of this thing; it is before God, not before men. Oh, may the Lord save us from having the preponderance before men, and the lesser measure before Himself. May all that is before men come out of what we are before God. That should be a matter of exercise for us; for you, for me; and we should ask the Lord that our secret life with Him over these matters shall be kept well abreast of all our public ministries and our outward activities. If the balance is on the side of what is public, and toward men, there will be weakness and failure. Strength and effectiveness will be according to the measure of our secret history with God. Then out from the secret place Nehemiah carried his heart-burden before men; but not initially that men might take account of it. He would fain, I think, have covered it up, for there is fear here when he realizes that it has been detected, has betrayed itself; perhaps unconsciously - certainly unwontedly.

And yet the manifestation of the burden has a right place when it comes that way; when, outwardly, others are able to take account of us and say: 'There is nothing put on in this matter; this is no mere professional thing; this is not some habit, something they are interested in; this is something which to them is a matter of life and death; this is a matter which goes right to the heart with them'. And men *are* able to discern whether it is like that or not. Oh, people know, better than perhaps we think they do, whether we are real or whether things are put on; whether we are speaking out of a book, or whether we are speaking out of our hearts; whether the thing is something we have collected, or whether it is something born of anguish.

I am speaking to brethren and sisters now to whom ministry is committed in a more public way. May I urge this upon you, that you ever seek to have your own heart deeply exercised in everything that you have to say publicly. Yes, it will cost; it will mean anguish, it will mean sorrow of heart, it will mean a price; but, beloved, it is the way of spiritual fruitfulness and effectiveness; only thus can the Lord make you His messenger, in His message, that is, a sign unto the people of the thing that you are saying. Thus are men able to say: 'Yes, that is not

something they have read or studied or prepared; that is something that has had a working in the life, and it has cost something'. It will cost, but it is the way of effectiveness and fruitful service.

And what is true as to public ministry will be true in relation to any instrument that the Lord will use for any special purpose; the thing must be wrought into it, and not be something that it has adopted. The Lord keep us from adopting things, but work the thing right into us. Well, that is Nehemiah; a man with a burden, and a man with a concern; one whose heart is deeply wrought upon by God to the end he might share His own Divine travail.

Divine Facilitations

Now a word as to the procedure of the man. First there is the man himself; then his concern for the testimony; and now his procedure in recovery. There was some history before he came out to take up his work definitely, and it is well just to note it because it has a place; a preparatory history we may call it. There were those signs of favour from the Lord which were basic to what followed. The king had discerned his inward state; had diagnosed his trouble as sorrow of heart; had put to him a question as to what he would have; and you notice what follows: "Then the king said unto me, 'For what dost thou make request?' So I prayed to the God of heaven" - instant, prompt, brief touch with heaven - "And I said unto the king..." I believe, beloved, that in those touches of response from heaven, which represent Divine favour; those helpful little things, we might call them, in this whole matter; where God just gives indications that this is His way, that He is in this - favourable signs - I believe in these things there is represented what very often obtains when the Lord is going to do something new in relation to His testimony.

The Lord prefaces what He will do by, shall we say, certain indications of favour. Presently we shall be up against the grim realities; presently faith will be well tested; the difficulties increasing, accumulating; but there have been those little favourable indications from the Lord that He was with us; that this was His way. They may not continue, but there is just that little space where the Lord seems to bear witness in various little helpful ways. He constitutes something which, in days of difficulty and darkness and adversity, we always remember as the Lord's way of showing us that this was our life-work, this was the way of His will for us. I think some of you know what I am talking about, and we can look back to a time when at the commencement of some new piece of life experience, service; some new movement of God in us and through us, there were marks, clear marks of Divine favour, and things just moved beautifully and wonderfully; it was all very romantic, all very wonderful; we were filled with wonder at the way the Lord was doing things, facilitating and helping. That was a phase: that passed, and the grim realities followed; but we do not forget that time. Thus it was with Nehemiah. For this short period everything seemed to be on his side, with him; there were these favourable touches of the Lord.

Well, that is very good, and that is a preparatory period which should be cherished; but if that passes do not think that things have gone wrong. The Lord was just getting you on the way; but He is not going to keep you on the way by sight, He is going to cause you to walk in the way by faith. It is like that. Remarkable things happen at the beginning, and those remarkable things do not always continue. One says that because it is so true to life and experience, and it is a thing not to be overlooked here as we take a survey of this movement of God. Very often the heart looks back upon those periods, and craves to have them all over again and says: "Where is the blessedness I knew when first I saw

the Lord"; it craves to have the early seals of God repeated again and again; but no, you advance beyond that.

Now the Lord's facilitation is to get you on the way, not to get you into a trap and leave you. You have that life in the background, and you know it was all the Lord, the Lord did it. We are not in this way by our own urge, effort, endeavour, scheming, planning; the Lord brought us in, and favoured us with marked indications that it was His way. At that time the signs of this way being the Lord's way were unmistakable; there is no doubt about it, the Lord marvellously put our feet on this road and, although there came a point where we ceased to have those conspicuous signs of Divine acts and undertakings, yet there was no doubt about it that our coming into this way was of the Lord.

Nehemiah met grim things later, but doubtless he always remembered the wonderful way in which the Lord facilitated the initiation of that into which he was Divinely brought. It may be the Lord will continue to give you much in the way of such tokens, but it will be the exception and not the rule if He does; do not expect that you are going to find your path strewn with flowers all the way. Very likely you will find an end of the roses, and the beginning of the thorns; but the Lord has indicated that it was right, it was His way, by helping at the beginning, and now you have to go on in faith. That was a preparatory stage with Nehemiah.

Two Sides of Prayer-Life

Now I want to draw your attention to Nehemiah's prayer-life. How basic this prayer life was to everything. You should read through the book again just to take account of this matter. You will find that Nehemiah's prayer-life was a very real thing, and a very persistent thing; you might almost say a continuous thing, but it was not always of the same kind.

In this first chapter you have the deep, secret outpouring of his heart to God. He is away with the Lord alone, and in a strong heart-emptying prayer, he pours himself out. He can do that, remember. That is a phase of his prayer-life; he *can* do it and he does. But as you read on you find that it is not always like that. His prayer is frequently what we may call ejaculatory: "So I prayed to the God of heaven". It is like an ejaculation, a sudden lifting up of the heart. There is no time for the outpouring of the heart. Here is a situation, an emergency, a difficult situation, something arising which allows of no getting away to God and pouring out the heart, but only permits of a lifting of it to the Lord on the spot in a moment, a touch with heaven; but he is in touch with heaven. Those two forms of prayer must go together.

We hear many people say, 'Yes, well I can pray anywhere; I can pray in a bus or a tram, or walking along the street'. Very often those people say that to excuse themselves from secret outpouring of heart before the Lord. Beware of that! I do not believe that we shall get heaven's sudden responses to sudden ejaculatory prayers unless we have a background of prayer. I do not believe that we can have an emergency touch with heaven if we have not a deep background-life with heaven.

Nehemiah's prayer-life brings these two things together; that because he had that prayer-life in secret with God where, as he could, he did pour himself out to God, then in the time of emergency he was already in touch with heaven, and heaven responded. It is important to see that. But when we have said that we must note the general fact, that an instrument, a vessel, or a work like Nehemiah's in an end-time in relation to the Coming of the Lord, is essentially a vessel and instrument with a strong prayer-life in secret with God, and for the

bringing in of heaven in emergencies it is essential that there be a background of prayer ministry.

It seems to me that Nehemiah did nothing without prayer. It seems that in every turn of the way he lifted his heart to the Lord; in every situation, question, difficulty, he was in touch with the Lord about it. He was a man who made prayer his ground of action, on every point, in every direction.

Now whether this interests you or not is not the question. The question is, are we going to be an instrument for the Lord for His deepest heart purpose? If so, there must be a life of prayer. There has to be the place with the Lord apart and alone in heart outpouring, and there has to be, from that, a constant touch with the Lord as we move in His interests from point to point. The prayer life of Nehemiah is something to study.

Taking Action

Then there is the matter of taking action; the action which Nehemiah took. He did take action, and that is something to take account of. There are many people who have burdens and concerns, but who never do any more than bemoan the situation as it is; who never get beyond deploring things. They are everlastingly talking about the bad conditions. Their whole conversation is concerning how wrong things are, and so they go about bemoaning the state of affairs; talking and never doing any thing.

Nehemiah was not like that. Nehemiah was very keenly alive to the situation and took it very much to heart, but he did not simply bemoan it, and he did not merely preach about it. We must not fall into a way of criticizing the Lord's people who are not where we think they ought to be; who do not know what we think they ought to know; who have not arrived at the place at which we have arrived, and therefore we consider them as being down there, and we talk about them thus: 'They have not the light, you know'. 'They have not entered into the truth, you know'.

Yes, we might even go beyond that, and denounce them for their backwardness; denounce them because they have not the light. It is easy to get into a way of condemning, to develop a spirit of condemnation, of judging. All that does not cost anything. The real question is: 'What are we doing about it?' Nehemiah with all his perception and discernment of things, and all his heartache, did not go to the people and say: 'Look here, you are all wrong, you are all out of the way, you are in a bad state'; he went to them and said: 'We are in a bad state; we are in a bad way'. He got down by the side of them as though he were where they were, and he was going to help them up to where he saw they ought to be, and to the place where he himself in spirit, already, was.

Now this is a matter we must recognize. You see here one of those laws of what is called the Church, the Body, and the physical body is taken in the Word as an illustration of the Church, which is Christ's Body. Now, suppose a hand and an arm have gone wrong, perhaps out of joint and the whole of one side is affected, and things are not working right; there is disorder, perhaps disease; maybe a very painful malady in those limbs, in that part of the body. Now if the other hand and arm should get up and say: 'You are all wrong over there, you ought not to be like that; we do not belong to you at all, we have no association with you, no connection', is that true? "The body is one". You cannot separate two or three of your limbs from your body, and put them in one place and the rest in another and still have a complete body.

No, the very fact of the organism means that you are one body, and if one member suffers all the members suffer with it. Being an organism, and not an organization, every member - although its condition may not be as bad as some other members - is involved by its very life in the state of the other. The body has one life, it has one nerve system, it is a corporate whole. That principle is here - "We" - and the law of the Body is this, that if there are those who are out of the way, who have not light, truth, life, as we think they ought to have, being a body, beloved, we cannot live in detachment from them. We are by the very fact of being an organism spiritually bound to them, a part of them; and the Lord is not going to cleave this Body down the centre and cut off that half which is more backward than the other.

Oh, no! That is not the Lord's way. The Lord does not divide the Body, the Body is a whole; and you will notice all the way through the Lord's Word, that the Lord brings some members into real concern for the others, in order to bring the others to a place where He would have them. And Nehemiah, although spiritually far above these people in his state, far beyond them, comes down there and says: "we".

Now do believe me, I feel so strongly that what the Lord wants is that there shall never be the sign of that division which is the fruit and outworking of any kind of superiority of light and knowledge and truth, that puts others who have not that light and truth in an inferior place; relegates them to another quarter, and regards them as something apart from the Lord's people. That must not be, and our attitude, the attitude of any who may have been given more light for ministry purposes - not only for themselves - to the whole Body, the attitude of such to others must be that of being in the place where they are, to help them on, and not to judge, to criticize, to condemn.

Oh, no, the Lord will not reward us because we have more light, but according to what we have done with the light He gave us. There will be many of the Lord's children in glory who had not half the light that you and I have, and they will be sharing His glory as much as you and I will, but on the basis of what they did with the light they had. Responsibility is according to light. Our responsibility will be all the greater if we have more light. Our attitude toward all whom we may feel - and have good reason to feel - are far short of what the Lord would have them be, must be one of earnest, humble, yearning over them and getting down helpfully alongside of them, not detaching ourselves and living apart, and regarding them as those who have not the light.

We must go out as Nehemiah did and say: 'We are involved in this'. If there is a bad state, we are involved in it; apart from the light that we have we are involved in it. Our responsibility for the light involves us, and we must take responsibility for the state of things, and work with God against it, in love, in fellowship. Thus did Nehemiah.

Oh, may the Lord speak to our hearts very directly through this word, and make us to see that there is something that He needs, something that must be if He is to be fully satisfied; that things with His people are not as He would have them; that the full testimony of His Son is not represented as He would have it represented. In order that it might be so He must have an instrument, a vessel; and these are the things which must characterize such a vessel: energy against all compromise and mixture in the things of God; a great heart-burden for the Lord's testimony; taking personal responsibility for the bad state; a deep and continuous touch with God by prayer; taking action in fellowship with God for recovery, and not merely bemoaning the state of things.

Part Three

A MODEL PRAYER OF INTERCESSION

Reading: Nehemiah 1:4-11.

It seems to me as though this prayer can be gathered up in six different features, or characteristics, and you may discover what they are as we read together. "And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days; and I fasted and prayed before the God of heaven". *Wept; mourned; fasted*. That is certainly anguish, passion, travail; but it is the first feature of intercessory prayer. That is where all intercessory prayer begins, in a state of heart like that. We have spent some time in seeking to make clear that everything in the Book of Nehemiah is a result of this passion, this concern for the Lord's interests; that it all comes out of prayer; and that prayer is the prayer of travail. We have to stop every time and ask ourselves first of all, 'Does the spiritual state amongst the Lord's people give us deep heart sorrow? Have we ever wept for the testimony? Have we ever mourned over spiritual conditions of the Lord's people?'

Knowing the Lord

Now the next thing, verse five: "And said, I beseech Thee, O Lord, the God of heaven, the great and terrible God, that keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love Him and keep His commandments". What does that represent? Here is a very important law operating in true intercessory prayer; a knowledge of the Lord; that is, knowing the Lord; knowing what kind of God we are dealing with. You will find that as this prayer develops, that knowledge of the Lord comes out much more fully, for Nehemiah takes the Lord back to His own word in the Book of Deuteronomy, and shows that what the Lord had said then to His people has literally come to pass here, and he bases his prayer upon that. What the Lord said in effect was: 'If you forsake My commandments I will scatter you among the nations, and you shall be no people to Me', and Nehemiah says: 'You keep covenant'. 'Moreover, You said that if we came back to Your commandments You would re-gather us' (Deuteronomy 28:64 to 30:13). You see he knows the Lord. There is passion, anguish, travail, but he knows the Lord; that is the background.

Persistence

"Let Thine ear now be attentive, and Thine eyes open, that Thou mayest hearken unto the prayer of Thy servant, which I pray before Thee at this time, day and night, for the children of Israel Thy servants, while I confess the sins of the children of Israel..." (Nehemiah 1:6). Let us look at the central clause: "... which I pray before Thee... day and night". That is persistence in prayer, perseverance; if you like - importunity. It represents the unwillingness to let this matter pass lightly, to let it be taken without seriousness; it means that he is holding on to God about this thing. Of course, much more may gather round it, but intercessory prayer is not a thing which is fulfilled by rushing into the presence of God, saying something, and rushing out again. Intercessory prayer which brings in the Lord's purpose is something which is a continuous burden, day and night.

Here, again, our hearts are greatly challenged I am sure. I do not know how many will be able to stand up to this challenge. That is for us to decide before the Lord, as to whether, in waking moments in the night, spontaneously our heart goes out to the Lord; it may be only a sentence, only a cry, but it represents the fact that that is our ever-present burden, that that thing is there all the time. You might think of a thousand and one other things when you wake up in the night,

but the first thing is a heart travail to the Lord concerning His interests, His testimony: "... which I pray... day and night"; this thing is ever present. There is persistence, continuation. That is a feature of true intercessory prayer, that we have travail, and we have understanding or knowledge of the Lord, and then we have persistence or importunity.

Vicarious Repentance

Now we go to the next thing in verse 6: "... while I confess the sins of the children of Israel, which we have sinned against Thee. Yea, I and my father's house have sinned" (verse 6b). Identification is in confession of this kind. When a man is found confessing what is not wholly his responsibility, something for which many others are responsible as well as himself; when he is confessing it as though it is his sin, that is identification; and when it is confession of this kind, it is acknowledgment, and it is repentance. So I think we may speak of this as the feature of confession. If we were using a phrase instead of a word, we would speak of vicarious repentance, repenting in the behalf of others. But confession is sufficient, it carries with it all that.

We have tried to tell ourselves in this message that we must not regard ourselves as something apart from the rest, some thing that is detached, and that looks on at things in any kind of judging, condemning, critical way, as though we had no part in it; but, being members of one Body, if one member suffers all the members suffer with it, and the suffering is the suffering of the whole Body. With Christ I am quite sure that is true, that He suffers in the measure in which any part of His Body comes short, because He needs the whole Body, in fullness, for the fullness of His expression and realization. So that He suffers, and if the Body is in any part coming short we are suffering in the suffering of Christ. Is not that what the Apostle meant when he said he was filling up that which was lacking of the sufferings of Christ? That is real intercession; prayer of confession and identification.

Faith in God's Word

"Remember, I beseech Thee, the word that Thou commandest Thy servant Moses, saying, 'If ye trespass, I will scatter you abroad among the peoples: but if ye return unto Me, and keep My commandments and do them... yet will I gather them... bring them unto the place that I have chosen, to cause My name to dwell there'" (Nehemiah 1:8-9). What I saw in this word was faith, because it is bringing God's Word as the basis, taking up a position in God's Word and saying: 'I believe that, I stand on that'. You find so often that is the ground of effectual prayer.

I was impressed the other day in reading Psalm 119, and underlined the occurrence of that phrase: "according to Thy word". "Quicken Thou me according to Thy word"; "Strengthen Thou me according to Thy word"; and so on. David was pleading with God on the ground of His Word, and fastening his faith in God. God and His Word are alike, they are immutable; they are unchangeable; they are established and faithful, and if we can come with the Word of God under our feet, we have a ground of confidence; the ground of a sure faith, and it would be a very good thing for us to be more exercised along that line - "Quicken Thou me according to Thy word". That is faith in God's Word; the Lord honours that, and when we come to Him we should have a ground of confidence.

Now Nehemiah is simply bringing the Lord to His own Word, and oh, how true it was to the Word of God! Turn to Isaiah 58. Now Isaiah lived long before Nehemiah's day (the arrangement of books, of course, may throw you out in that,

but he was long before Nehemiah's time) and Isaiah spoke this word: "If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke, the putting forth of the finger... If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on My holy day", etc. Then what? "... thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in". That is Nehemiah. Well, Nehemiah brought the Lord to His Word, and the Lord actually fulfilled Isaiah 58, through Nehemiah. You see that is the ground, pleading the Word in faith.

Utter Surrender

Now finally in verse 11: "O Lord, I beseech Thee, let now Thine ear be attentive to the prayer... of Thy servants... who delight to fear Thy name..." The fear of the Lord, when you study it in light of the whole Word of God, simply means that you utterly yield yourself to God's will; that God's will takes pre-eminence; and when the Lord Jesus said: "Father... remove this cup... nevertheless not My will, but Thine, be done" (Luke 22:42), He "was heard in that He feared" (Hebrews 5:7b). That was utter and absolute surrender to the will of God whatever the cost; that is the fear of the Lord, the beginning of wisdom.

Here then, as the central thing in this eleventh verse, you have delight in the Lord. You can use one word, either abandonment or consecration, whichever you prefer. Hear the prayer of Thy servants "who delight to fear Thy name". That is abandonment to the Lord, consecration to the Lord; and we know quite well that in intercessory prayer we never get through until we come to that place where everything that is personal, our own delight and satisfaction, is set aside and the Lord's interests alone govern our hearts.

There is, I think, a transcendent cry in this prayer; and for true intercessory prayer we must come to that place. You have prayed, you have been importunate, persistent, passionate, travailing, and you have stood upon God's Word, and yet withal there may be some little fragment of your own desire that gives heat to the travail. However right your position may be as to the Word, the Lord has to wait until every bit of personal interest has been ruled right out, and then when we come down to the place where it is true that it is only the Lord's good pleasure that is in view and that the Lord can do what He wills, all the desire is that His will shall be done and our delight is in Him, to fear His Name, to be utterly abandoned to His will, then we have a clear way with the Lord, we are then through in the spirit of prayer.

You see we get so far and the last thing the Lord has to say to us is: 'Are you in this? Have you some personal interest in this matter?' Then our hearts have to be searched as to whether it is our own desire or whether after all it is only the Lord's personal pleasure and delight, and if the thing we ask is not for the Lord's pleasure we do not want it. When we come there we have a clear way and the prayer is complete.

So you see we have a model prayer of intercession here, and you will be able to understand by this little analysis what we meant when we said that in order for the ejaculatory prayers to be effectual - those ejaculatory prayers that come out later - there must be this deeper background of prayer where everything is like this. You construct all other prayer upon this foundation, and because this is the foundation, all other prayer is here. Everything has been sifted out beforehand.

I trust this meditation will bring to our hearts anew the Lord's desire that the instrument to be used in a peculiar way for His satisfaction shall be a prayer instrument after this sort. Everything that is brought to us by way of light has to

be prayed in and prayed out; prayer has to be behind and before in the fulfilment of our ministry.

The Lord write that in our hearts.