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Nehemiah chapter number one. Nehemiah chapter number one. It's awful quiet in this building today. So where's Nehemiah? Does anybody know where Nehemiah is? It's like nobody wants to say anything so everybody's just kind of looking around. They're diligently going to the Bible like, I know it's in there somewhere. Did he say Jeremiah? Did he say? No, Nehemiah. Nehemiah chapter number one. Nehemiah chapter number one. I'll wait about another 15 seconds. Another 10. That is 5, 4, 3, 2, 1. And we probably should go home and start looking a little bit at the Old Testament to see if we can't remember the Old Testament books beginning from Genesis ending in Malachi,

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I'll be more than happy to send you out for a steak dinner. So the first person who finds me that can come up to me and do that immediately following service, I'll be more than happy to send you for a steak dinner. Now I didn't tell you where I'm gonna send you for a steak dinner, but I'll be more than happy to send you out for a steak dinner, all right? So find me immediately following and you can't miss one and there's no redos, amen? Amen, Nehemiah chapter number one, verse number one.

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And the scriptures record for us. The words of Nehemiah, the son of Haliah. Now it happened in the month of Tealsville in the 20th 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,

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who had survived the exile, and concerning Jerusalem. And they said to me, the remnant of there and the providence who have survived the exiles in great trouble and shame, the wall of Jerusalem is broken down and its gates are destroyed

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by fire.

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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. And I said, oh, Lord, God of heaven, the great 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

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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 people. But if you return to me and keep my commandments and do them, though your outcasts are in the

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uttermost parts of the 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. Oh Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of your servant and to the prayer of your servants who delight to hear your name and give success to the servant today and grant him mercy in the sight of this man now I was cupbearer to the King father we just

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pray that you take us into a place where we are learning about you to open up our understanding that our gaze father is not on the weeks that are before us for the things that we have to do when we leave but upon he who is the Alpha and the Omega the beginning and the end make us pliable teachable that we may proclaim your glory in the name of your son the Lord Jesus we pray amen so as I said we are beginning our journey through Nehemiah and if you were here last week

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I spent a little bit of time speaking about faith and I began defining faith as a firm conviction, a belief directed towards someone or something leading to trust. We said that this faith is the personal conviction of truth. It's something that's held and believed. Sometimes when we begin to speak about the faith that saves, we conclude and should conclude that faith is synonymous with trust. It can be defined as the personal conviction of a truth respecting man's relationship to God in all things that

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are divine. So saving faith like any other personal conviction is something that you see people acting upon. And that's what we'll soon see in Nehemiah. A man whose faith in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the great I Am, empowered his life. My prayer as we journey through this book is to see ourselves as the Ezra and Nehemiah of our day,

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a people whose hearts are stirred to action for God. So often, I hear people say that the church is in need of revival. And I couldn't agree more. However, in order for there to be revival, our hearts must first be stirred. Before we start to talk about revival, I want to

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give you the backdrop as we begin to study Nehemiah. So let me warn you, we're about to have a history lesson. So often when we open the New Testament, immediately it seems practical and it seems like it's relevant to me and so we can walk right into it. This morning I'm going to take you through some history. So if you find yourself getting, you know, a little drop, slapping yourself is okay. Just don't slap the person next to you, okay? And so take some time, take it in. If you have something to write with, take notes.

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It's important that we understand the backdrop so we understand exactly where we're going. So if we go back in time, after the death of King David's son Solomon, Israel became a divided nation. And if you're unfamiliar with what I mean by that, Israel became a nation as a result of God's promise to a man by the name of Abram. In Genesis chapter number 12, verse number 1, the Lord said, Now the Lord said to Abram, Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make you a great nation and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.

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I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed. As a result of men's fall in the garden, which Adam and Eve ate from the tree, after being instructed by God not to eat, they did disobey God. And as a result, the consequence was death. Now we know that that death was not a physical death but a spiritual one. Mankind fell into sin and the wages of sin is death. Should we

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keep that in the back of our mind? That was what God clearly commanded and instructed. I need you to see the faithfulness of God as we're going through this section of Scripture. God's promises always remain true. Mankind was eternally separated from Him. However, we know the Word of the Lord that before the foundations of the world, the Scriptures tell us that Christ died for us, meaning that from the beginning God had a plan for man's restoration. So he calls Abram. He promises not only to make him a great nation, he declared

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that all the nations of the world would be blessed by him. Now we know that Abraham eventually had Isaac and Isaac had a son Jacob and Jacob after wrestling with the angel had his name changed to Israel and Israel went on to have 12 sons and the 12 sons became the 12 tribes and the nation that we see on the map as Israel is representative of those 12 sons which became the 12 tribes which became the nation of Israel. Now there was a point in time where God was

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leading Israel and Israel decided that they wanted a king they wanted to be ruled like all the other nations. They were rejecting God and after being warned by God of the type of king that would rule over them, God gave them what they desired. At first, things seemed good. Man by the name of Saul became king and the scriptures record him as a foot taller than everyone else.

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Choice, handsome man, fitting and perfect for a king. However, Saul became prideful and in the end he disobeyed God and as a result, the Lord took the kingdom from him and gave it to a young shepherd boy by the name of David. And you might remember David, this young boy, some stones and a slingshot that kills the mighty Goliath. And this David became king.

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And although he had some problems of his own, he was a man after God's own heart. David eventually went home to be with the Lord and his son Solomon, the wisest man to have ever lived, became king. Unlike his father, as Solomon began to age, his heart was turned from God. It was a result of his intermarrying for power and position. 1 Kings chapter 11 verse 4 tells us this, for when Solomon was old his wives turned away his heart after other gods. Solomon had about 700 wives.

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Yes boy, it's hard to deal with one. And so, he must have really been twisted but I'm okay well going all right it says his wives turned away his heart after other gods and his heart was not only holy true to the Lord is God as in his heart was not holy true to the Lord is God as was the heart of David his father see as he began to turn so did the nation. In the end, what winds up happening is that his leadership began to deteriorate. As a matter of fact, he instituted a tax that would later bring great division between the tribes of Israel. Solomon began well, but Solomon

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In 931, Israel became a divided nation. Two tribes, Judah and Benjamin, stayed with his son Rehoboam, while 10 other tribes went after Jeroboam. So you have a divided kingdom, Judah in the south and Israel in the north. This was known as the great divorce.

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So just think about what I'm saying. If you're not a history buff, you're like, okay, it's a lot of information. What does this have to do with where we're going? I want you to think back to a defining moment in your life that significantly impacted the course of it.

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Just think back. Because as you begin to think back, you'll see how things in our past shape who we are in the future. History is defined as a study of past events, particularly in human affairs.

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So when we look back at those moments, we see how they shape our character and our identity. And the same is true of a nation Israel wasn't just the son of Abraham Israel became the mighty nation God promised Abraham now while history gives us a detailed accounting of things biblical history isn't merely concerned with providing history so that we have an accurate accounting of events. Biblical history is concerned with revealing God, the maker of heaven

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and earth. I can make this statement. Biblical history is concerned with theology. All biblical history is concerned with theology. What's theology? You might ask. Two Greek words. It is the study of God. Biblical history is revealing to us who God is and his hand in redeeming mankind from the curse of sin and death from the beginning. Through history we see the consistency of God dealing justly, mercifully, and lovingly with mankind. When you come to understand that the agenda of biblical history is different than that

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of secular history, you see its purpose in revealing the nature of God. As we begin to recount the actions of God and his dealings with the affairs of man, we learn about God's nature. And what we learn, most importantly, is that God is sovereign. So after Solomon dies, Israel erupts into what can be called civil war. Within themselves they begin to fight. Solomon turned from the Lord and should have known that this would have resulted in judgment. Micah 6 8 says, he has told you old man what is good and

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what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God Solomon did not walk in the same way as his father and as a result not only would The nation of Israel be divided They would eventually be conquered first Kings chapter number 11 the scriptures record And the Lord was angry with Solomon because his heart had turned away from the Lord, the

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God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods, but he did not keep what the Lord commanded. Imagine the Lord just speaking to you. He's speaking to Solomon, the wisest man. Twice he's telling him not to go after other gods, but Solomon doesn't listen. Therefore, the Lord said to Solomon,

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since this has been your practice, he and that practice, it's what he continued to do over and over and over again. And you have not kept my covenant and my statues that I have commanded you. I will surely tear the kingdom from you

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and will give it to your servant. Yet for the sake of David, your father, I will not do it in your days, but I will tear it out of the hands of your son. I

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Will not tear away all the kingdom

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But I will give one tribe to your son for the sake of David my servant and for the sake of Jerusalem that I have chosen God let Solomon know that it's because of your father that I'm not doing this in your day But just so you know that I am going to do this in your son's day There's a hint of mercy there in that. God is not putting Solomon through it yet There is the pain of Solomon knowing that God's true to his word and that his son would have to deal with the aftermath of

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his sin Solomon turned God remained faithful to David, but he also remained faithful to his promises sin always has consequences. Can I tell you the darkest day of any nation isn't when we're at war with other countries. It's when we're at war within ourselves. Think about that. A few years back in the midst of the social unrest, this wasn't what was taking place inside. And the darkest day of any nation is when we begin to fight among ourselves. Imagine what this

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must have been like when Solomon's son began to see the infighting that was taking place as they began to take up arms against one another. The kingdom was divided. Israel, in the north they were called Israel, in the south they were called Judah, and civil unrest was taking place. Biblical history is always a great teacher. When we sin against God, out of love, he first warns us. And God is always warning us

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because he doesn't delight in punishing his people. However, Israel and Judah, the Northern and the Southern kingdoms, they rejected the Lord's message through the prophets. Amos says in chapter two, verse four, thus says the Lord,

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for three transgressions of Judah, and for four I will not turn away its punishment, because they have despised the law of the Lord, and have not kept his commandments. Their lies lead them astray, lies with which their fathers followed, but I will send a fire upon Judah, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem. Verse 6, Thus says the Lord, for three transgressions of Israel, and for four I will not turn away

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its punishment, because they sell the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of sandals. Behold, I am weighed down by you as a cart full of cheese is weighed down. Therefore, flight shall perish from the swift. The strong shall not strengthen his power, nor shall the mighty deliver himself. He shall not stand who handles the bow. The swift of foot shall not escape, nor shall he who rides a horse deliver himself. The most

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courageous men might shall flee naked in the day, says the Lord. I just want you to get this picture. He's telling Solomon what's going to happen. And then what begins to take place is there's this civil unrest and they begin to tear themselves apart. And Amos was constantly warning them what was going to take place. God's not going to look lightly upon your sin. Just because something is not happening in our day, doesn't mean that God's not gonna hold true

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to his word. Back to biblical history. What do we know about God? Biblical history is concerned with theology. It is the study of God. Sometimes we go to the Bible, what we're doing

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is we're rubbing it like we're looking for a genie who can give us a wish, rather than understanding the sovereign supreme creator, who he is, how he loves and how he rules because God does rule. We want the God who's just forever loving. He is forever loving which is why he's just. But his justice is far different than man's justice and as you begin to go through Scripture

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you begin to see it. We must remember that while we serve a loving God is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of a living God. As we read the scriptures we learn this. With all the warnings Israel doesn't turn back. And so God holds true to his word. In 722 BC the Assyrians conquered Israel. And when they conquered Israel some of the remnants from that tribe went down south. And Judah was able to hold off for about another three years and then all of a sudden there comes that man Nebuchadnezzar and he comes and the

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Babylonian Empire comes in and what begins to take place is they not only capture them but in 586 BC they then go into captivity. 2nd Chronicles 36 17 therefore he brought up against them the king of the Chaldeans who killed their young men with a sword in the house of their sanctuary and had no compassion on young man or virgin old man or age he gave them all into his hand and all the vessels of the house of God great and small and all the treasure of the house

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of God and the treasures of the king and of his princess and all he brought to Babylon and they burned the house of God and broke down the wall of Jerusalem and burned all his palaces with fire and destroyed all his precious vessels. He took into exile in Babylon those who had escaped from the sword and they became servants to him and to his son until the establishment of the kingdom of Persia to fulfill the word of the Lord by the mouth of

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Jeremiah until the land had enjoyed its Sabbath all the days that it laid desolate it kept Sabbath to fulfill 70 years. Was prophesied that Israel would go into captivity for 70 years and God brought it to pass. Once again, when we began to read through the Old Testament I know for some of us it's like, that's just like foreign.

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It's a place where we don't typically go. But if you want to know God, you can't just know half of Him. The old and the new go together. From Genesis to Revelation, that's the only way you get a perfect picture of the God you serve. Anything short of that takes away and thus we don't truly fully grasp the nature of God. So the picture that we have before us is that Israel goes into captivity. Jerusalem, its walls, the temple destroyed.

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As siege was taking place, those who survived the sword went back to Babylon in captivity, very much like their ancestors did when they went into captivity in Egypt. Once again, God's Word proving to be true. Some 800 miles away, now in captivity, Judah cries out in the Psalms.

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Psalms 137, 1. By the waters of Babylon, there we hung up our leer for there are captors require of us songs and our tormentors Murr saying sing us one of the songs of Zion How shall we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land? If I forget you old Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its skills Let my tongue stick to the roof of my mouth if I do not remember you if I do not set Jerusalem above my highest joy you want to talk about dark

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days how many times has God warned us about something how many times has he spoken to us personally and yet we don't heed is if we can rub the lamp long enough to make God do what we want him to do when he's already proclaimed exactly what he will do. The psalm, you see their lament. Think about God is just as you see that he's just and the consequences that he gives, he's also just

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in the deliverance that he brings. See, when you look there in 2 Chronicles 36, verse 20 is really interesting. He says, He took into exile in Babylon those who had escaped from the sword, and they became servants to him and to his son, until...

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God's sending a message. Until the establishment of the kingdom of Persia. The Medes and the Persians, they defeated Babylon. And it's interesting because it was two kingdoms who came together. One led by Darius, the other led by Cyrus and these two kings joined forces and in joining forces they came up against Babylon and they defeated Babylon and so the Medes and the Persians were in control and so

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what begins to happen is something that's amazing you see God works in ways that's hard for us sometimes to understand. This defeat was setting the stage for God's people to return to Jerusalem. Ezra chapter number one, in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia so that he made a proclamation through all his kingdom and

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also put it in writing. Thus says Cyrus, king of Persia, the Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem which is in Judah. Whoever is among you, all his people, may his God be with you and let him go up to Jerusalem which is in Judah and rebuild the house of the Lord, the God of Israel. He is the God who is in Jerusalem and let each survivor in whatever place he sojourns

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be assisted by the men of his place with silver and gold, with goods and with beast and decides free will offerings for the house of God that is in Jerusalem. Cyrus lays out a decree. But remember, we were talking about biblical history

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reveals the nature of God. And what we see is God's divine purpose taking place. Ezra and Nehemiah in the, if you go back and look at the Hebrew canon, they were considered one book. But eventually they became two separate books which is what we see today. But the Medes and the Persians victory was actually God's hand at work. It was Cyrus's leadership that

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began to open the door for the exiles to return and rebuild Jerusalem. That's what the first six chapters of Ezra reveals if you go through and you read it. Again, if biblical history is teaching us anything, is that God works everything together for His good, for His glory, according to His plan. There were three attempts to go back and rebuild. The first was under Zerubbabel in 536. Then a second came under Ezra 80 years later. And then the last one came 13 years later under a man by the name of Nehemiah.

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So I want us to make sure that we're paying attention. And I pray that we're paying attention to what's going on in the world around us. Because remember, God change. He remains consistent. Since biblical history is concerned with revealing how God deals with mankind, then it behooves us to think about what's going on in the world around us. Now I know you might be thinking, Pastor Will is saying be caught up in current affairs and events and that seems

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kind of like contradictory because doesn't he always say exactly the opposite Want to make sure that I am very very very clear. I Never said ignore what's going on in the world My point is that we get so caught up in it that we stop seeing God at work What begins to happen is we take his place. God is sovereign.

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One preacher puts it like this. There is no significance ultimately that will be explained in terms of the linear progression of human history, save that which intersects with and is designed and divine by God himself as it relates to his people. When we descend from the 35,000 feet

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and can not only make out lakes and rivers, but specifically that lake and that river, it's here we begin to understand that God is sovereign over all the events of human history. You see, so much of the stuff that we're on the receiving end of makes us feel like we're the answer to everything, that our call or text is key to everything, that our letter, our vote is the answer to it all, that somehow or another we're deists, that God took his hands off of it and we're

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it ourselves. No. God is working his purpose out as year succeeds to year. The rise of kingdoms, the fall of kingdoms, the exaltation of leaders, the defamation of countries is all under the control of God and that's what biblical history makes apparent. The Lord determines the history of his own people but he also fulfills his will through the mighty kings of foreign powers. Beloved, biblical history has shown that God doesn't need your vote or you in

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order to make something happen. If you haven't learned anything thus far as we've been talking, what you see is you see one power rise up, one power come down. You see God move through a man that knows him. You see God moving to a man who rejects him. You see God moving to a man who has absolutely nothing to do with him. What you see is the sovereignty of God. That's what the Old Testament reveals. We get so caught up in what's going on. The reason why you hear me say things about current events is because the next thing I know there's 50 people outside with a picket sign thinking they're going to change everything.

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Let me help you. You're not. But let me help you. If God desires to change it, he doesn't need you to do it. He can move upon the person in the White House and make him change it all. God's plan will not be thwarted. He uses us because he chooses to, not because he has to. And we've seen time and time again in history that if we take a step back and really begin to seek the face of the Lord, we actually begin to see him at work. In this section of scripture, what we're seeing is God's about to work through a man named Nehemiah, but before he could work through the man who had a heart that was burdened like his, he works through a

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man who doesn't know him at all. The scriptures are clear. It said that God moved upon his heart. The Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, king of Persia. That's just an interesting thing for me. I'm sitting back and I'm looking at it. So who can't you work through? God doesn't control you. Man has free will. So then how is it that you can get kings of foreign powers who have nothing to do with you, do what you desire them to do.

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One of the things that's really important that we need to understand is that you don't need power in order to lead people, you need influence. And God influences people. That's what we see time and time. He has all power.

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He could just make it happen. But yet you see God working in the hearts of men, in the hearts of his body. We see it time and time and time again. We are to pay attention to what's going on in the world. Why?

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So that we can be ready to be used by God when he calls. We pay attention so that we can see his hand at work. We pay attention, here's why, so we don't lose heart.

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Just doesn't make sense.

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It seems like the world is just getting worse and worse and worse. Yes, because it's supposed to. The Scriptures have always told us that. And so what are we to do? Stand ready. What are we to do? Continue to look at the Scriptures and see how God continues to move through biblical history. You can have faith in what God's going to do tomorrow when you see what he did yesterday. And so we have to become students of what God is doing. Here we have the remnant in exile. They had no power and while King

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Nebuchadnezzar seemed untouchable, God allowed two foreign kings to come together to defeat him. And then in the process uses Cyrus to then begin to set things in order so that the temple can be built again, so that Israel would be able to come home. Jeremiah declared this a long time ago. Jeremiah 29 1. Now these are the words of the letter of Jeremiah the prophet sent from Jerusalem to the remainder of the elders who were carried away captive. They're in captivity. And so he writes to the priests, the prophets and all the people

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whom Nebuchadnezzar had carried away, captured from Jerusalem to Babylon. Jump down to verse 10. For thus says the Lord, after 70 years are completed at Babylon, I will visit you and perform my good word toward you and cause you to return to this place. For I know the thoughts that I think towards you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil to give you a future and a hope Then you will call up on me and go and pray to me and I will listen to you and you will seek me and find

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Me when you search me with all your heart I will be found by you says the Lord and I will bring you back from captivity I will gather you from all the nations and from all the places where I've driven you says the Lord and I will bring you To the place from which I caused you to be carried away beloved So often I hear people Quoting Jeremiah 29 11. It's like their verse. I know the plans he has for you

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I know the plans he has for me. I know the plans. He has context is important Context it can't be your favorite scripture like you can rub the lamp and God has all these magnificent things planned out for you first Off he's talking to the Prophet Jeremiah second off. He's talking to Israel the returning Jews He's letting them know that listen. I told you to the Prophet Amos I told you through other prophets that if you continue down this course the judgment was going to come at the same time I know that I'm going to come and vindicate you because I'm gonna vindicate my name and so I'm going to come

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I'm gonna deliver you I'm gonna bring you back God saying I'm the only person who's doing this in Genesis chapter number 15 When Abraham is waiting to have the promised son and he's wondering what's taking God so long like Lord You promised me the child the child hasn't come yet. If you recall Abraham then falls into a deep sleep and what happens is there's this pot that goes between two fires this torch that passes between two fires and what that signifies in their ancient time is the cutting of a covenant. Except typically what happens is you have two

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parties walking between the fire so as to represent both parties cutting a covenant except you only have one problem here there's only one torch being passed through which means Abraham's asleep so who's God cutting a covenant with? Himself! Because he knew that the only person that could make this happen was him. He didn't need Abraham, he used Abraham and he wanted Abraham to know that I'm cutting a covenant, a covenant that will not be

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broken, a covenant will be binding so I'm not making it with man I'm making it with myself. So what you begin to see is you start to walk through biblical history you see God says I have a plan so why are you guys tripping from Genesis to Revelation I've laid it out you can even see it we have the blessed privilege of being able to see what they didn't and so now here we stand today and we look at what's going on and we start to get so uptight or so frightened

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or so stirred that we don't know what to do yet if we go back and just look, time and time again, God showed up. He knew the plans he had. He knew that he would cause them to prosper. He knew he would not leave them in exile. He knew that while he was responsible for their captivity,

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he would also be responsible for their deliverance. The same God who allowed it is the same God that would bring them home. You want to talk about sovereignty. You want to talk about God working His plan. You want to talk about everything in creation being God's disposal. He moves upon the king of Persia to work out his providential will concerning his people. That's why Numbers

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23 19 is a really favorite scripture of mine. God is not a man that he should lie nor a son of man that he should repent. Has he said it? Will he not do it? Or has he spoken it? And will he not make it good? How many times have you walked around and you think I just don't know, I just don't know. I'm reading it but I don't know if he's good for it. We do know who we're talking about, right? The maker of heaven, I don't know how God's going to work this situation out. I don't know how God's going to move in this. I don't know how God's going to move in

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this. We need to spend more time in the scriptures in looking at the nature of God and seeing how God moves. The reason why we have the scriptures, they've been giving for our learning so that patience and endurance through the scripture, we might have hope, Romans 15. So if we spend more time in the Bible, we're encouraged by what we see. Listen, I know what's going on but CNN don't freak me out. I don't trip out on what's happening. This is what's happening. What do you think the world's coming to? Destruction. How do you know

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that? Because the Word tells me that it is. So what am I supposed to do? I'm supposed to be ready. I'm supposed to be ready. I'm supposed to continue to, as the old King James would say, gird up them loins.

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Supposed to stand ready.

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But what does that mean? How do we stand ready? Can I tell you how you stand ready? By being students of the word. You can't be ready if you don't know when your commander says move.

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And so often we're stuck,

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not because God's not issuing a command,

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because we can't hear it. And so we get stuck at Jeremiah 29, 11. Oh, I know the plans he has for me without considering why that was said where Israel was who put them there and why sin has consequences it always has it always will but when you come to Christ, those consequences, your King has stepped in and taking them for you.

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This is the picture. This is what he's telling us. The answer, as we begin to go through this, is that we need to make sure that we can see how God is omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent, and that his providential plan will succeed. Not maybe, not kind of, it will. Because this is what it has taught us. So as we begin to look at Nehemiah, we're going to be going on a journey. We're going to be learning more and more about God. How he establishes his will in ways that we

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never expect. If you're wondering is every Sunday going to be a history lesson, let me help you. No, it's not. But they needed you to understand where they were in order for you to understand where Nehemiah was about to take them. So understanding how God's hand was in all of it. They didn't just fall into captivity. They were sent into captivity because of their disobedience.

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God was not out of the equation and all of a sudden showed up in it. He's been in it the whole time. Can I tell you he's in your life right now? No matter the good, bad or indifferent, you're wondering where God is.

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He says, I'm right here, I've never left. Maybe you might wanna turn around and look for me. Said, you'll find me if you seek me with all your heart So, where are we yet with that my Bible tells me no man seeks after God which means if you're seeking after him he's drawing you She's the Holy Spirit at work in you Listen beloved

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We're in 2024 The election will soon be here and everybody starts to draw their lines let me help you God already knows who's gonna be in the White House he knows exactly what he's going to do and how it's going to play out this isn't a don't get involved don't vote don't it I'm not saying any of that that's between you and God what I'm simply saying is that I'm trusting that the

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God who spoke and called those things that be not as though they were is in complete control and that His good and perfect will will be done. That's the backdrop. Give me five minutes and I'm going to read it again. The words of Nehemiah the sons of Hacaliah. Now it happened in the month of Chisvel in the 20th 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

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Jews who escaped, who had survived the exile, concerning Jerusalem and they said to me the remnant there in the Providence who have survived the exiles in great trouble and shame the wall of Jerusalem is broken down and its gates are destroyed by fire remember we saw this we read through Chronicles and so now the the exiles have been and been set free and twice they've tried to go back to rebuild but twice they were stopped Nehemiah isn't a king. He isn't a soldier. He isn't a foreign dignitary. He's the son of Hacaliah.

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Who's Hacaliah? Don't nobody know. He's the son of Hacaliah. And it's interesting to me, because as we get to verse number 11, he says that I was the king's cupbearer. What else do we know about Nehemiah? This is the first time he's mentioned in all of scripture. So we don't know who Hakaliah is. This is the first time we're hearing about Nehemiah.

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So then where are we going? Remember, biblical history. What have we learned about God? That his thoughts are not our thoughts, and that his ways are not our ways, Isaiah 55, 8. The time now is around 445 BC.

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Nehemiah is the cupbearer for the king. At first glance, everything seems OK. He's the king's servant. But Nehemiah is more than just a servant. The role of a cupbearer, he was the first one to drink or to sample anything that was given to the king

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to eat and or to drink. And you can understand the reason why. If somebody wanted to kill him, they would either poison what he was drinking or poison the food. And so the cup there had the distinction of being the person who would taste whatever that is. It will be like me saying to my son, Patrick, listen, you're gonna follow me around. We're gonna go to some places where people don't really like me that much. But before I drink something, I need you to drink it first.

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Okay, before I eat something, I need you to take a bite off of it first. And so my hope is as they see you, they might be more afraid of you than they are of me, so they might change their plan around. But nevertheless, right?

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How, why would I go to him and not go to, let's say,

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why would I go to my son

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rather than just randomly picking somebody? Just think about it. It all has to do with trust. Right? It all has to do with trust. Understand, Nehemiah was in a trusted position. You had to know that this dude had your back because he actually could poison you himself. So he was just the king's cupbearer. That wasn't just a happenstance. That's a position that very few men had. You had to be trusted in order to be in that spot. So think about it, right? Here we have this man who's next to the king. He's not just a servant.

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He's more than a servant. Now remember that I said that twice they've tried to rebuild and it was brought to not. In other words, as they continued, something slowed it down. Cyrus decreed, hey, people can go back to Jerusalem. In fact, I want them to go back and I want them to begin to rebuild the walls. But the enemy is already at work. So under Zerubbabel it stops. Under Ezra it stops again. And then King Cyrus, he dies. And in Ezra chapter number four, verse number 11, a letter goes to the new king. To King Artaxerxes, from your servant, the men of

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the region beyond the river, and so forth. Let it be known to the king that the Jews who came up from us have come to us at Jerusalem and are building the rebellious and evil city and are finishing its walls or repairing the foundations. Let it now be known to the king that if the city is built and the walls completed they will not pay tax tribute or custom and the king's treasury will be diminished this letter goes to our desert sees and he reads the letter in

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verse 18 of the same chapter the letter which you sent to us has been clearly read before me and I gave the command and a search has been made and it was found that this city in former times has revolted against kings and rebellion and sedition have been fostered in it. There have also been mighty kings over Jerusalem who have ruled over all the region before the river

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and tax and tribute and customs were paid to them. Now give the command to make these men cease that this city may not be built until the command is given by me." Artaxerxes says, no, we're not doing this. I know history too.

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And I understand that the Jews at one time had power. I understand that they would rebel. So you want to know what? I agree with you. Let's cease until building stops. Here's the beauty. The Lord always has the right man in the right place at the right time. Because Nehemiah was cupbearer to Artaxerxes, the very king who stopped the project. Now you have Nehemiah standing right next to him, his trusted companion. Much like his contemporary, Esther, he was positioned for such a time as this.

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And so now the very man who stopped the rebuilding would be the same man who would not only order it to be rebuilt but would then send letters so that he would be able to get the resources needed in order to rebuild. I want you to get the picture. You would think that once our reserve sea stops it, that's it, it's over. Clearly he's not like Cyrus. And God is constantly looking down and saying, oh ye of little faith, I got a man. He's an ordinary dude.

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No one's ever heard of him before. And this ordinary dude is going to come alongside the king. And this ordinary guy who nobody knows is gonna be trusted by the king. And it's gonna be this ordinary guy that I'm gonna move because this ordinary guy doesn't have an ordinary heart.

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You see this ordinary heart,

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ordinary guy has an extraordinary heart, a heart like my son, David. And so what begins to happen as you see God moving, but just so God makes sure you know that it's Him. Artaxerxes doesn't die and another king come in. No, I'm gonna show you my power

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because I'm gonna move on him. The same way I stirred the spirit of Cyrus watch me sir the king watch me stir the heart of our desert sees and so God does through the Prophet Nehemiah something begins to happen and we begin to see the heart of this king begin to shift as the Kings cupbearer there were certain privileges that Nehemiah found himself standing in. He was positioned by God and his position wasn't random. So in verse 2 when it says, Hannah and I, one of my

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brothers, came with certain men from Judah and I asked him concerning the Jews who escaped, who had survived the exile concerning Jerusalem, what we see is now Nehemiah some 800 miles away. See where his heart is? 800 miles away. You see, he could have taken the position that that's not my problem. I'm in a good spot. And so I'm with the King. I know things are rough for you guys up there. But not only am I with the King, we're like this. He trusts me, I trust him. So what's happening in Jerusalem isn't my problem. He was in the king's

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palace enjoying a trusted position, yet his heart was burdened. We know it because of the first question that he asked. Hannah and I, which is most theologians agree, was his real brother. When he came with men from Judah, he asked, he wanted to know what was going on with the Jews who had survived the exile and what was going on with Jerusalem. What's going on with my people?

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What's going on with Jerusalem? Let me say it again. The Lord raises up men and women whose hearts are burdened with the same thing that his heart is burdened with. I was in here yesterday. I had a conversation with a man that I usually leave nameless by my name of the day, John, Jackie's

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husband. And we were having an interesting conversation. We were talking about a lot of things as it relates to the church. And as we were talking about the church, we're talking about, you know, whether it's people in the church, leadership in the church, the church of the things that we touched on is how God always raises up men and women who share the same burden as Him. I think sometimes we have a lot of people within the church, but we don't all share

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the same burden. Being in the church doesn't mean that you share the same burden as I do. It doesn't mean that I share the same burden as you do. And so I think that it's important that we understand that when God selected Nehemiah, he didn't select just any man. If you go back to the scriptures, you think about Paul when he's writing in the book of Philippians, and we looked at

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that. When he talked about two men, he talked about Timothy, and he talked about Epaphroditus. He elevated both men, but when it came to Epaphroditus was a man known by the church, beloved by Paul, and extremely faithful. But he said, I would like to send to you Timothy, because there's nobody like him, because he is just like me in my care for you. And so I know sometimes we say, well, we can't all care in the same manner.

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Actually, we can.

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Because the heart you have isn't yours, it's Christ's.

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When he says that we're to love our neighbor greater than ourselves,

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when he says to esteem others greater than ourselves, when he says, let this mind be in you,

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which was in Christ Jesus,

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who didn't think it robbery to be equal with God, but consider himself of no reputation and take in the form of a bond servant. He humbled himself to the point of death. Death on the cross. That's the mind we're supposed to have. And so it's really, really important because, can I tell you something? We always talk about God searching to and fro. Can I tell you what

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he's looking for? Somebody who has a heart just like him. Listen, that's his desire because he He uses people like that in different places at different times in his divine plan Does that mean that this person is greater than that person is greater than that person? No, did it mean that Nehemiah was greater than anybody else who would help him rebuild? No, it just meant that at that moment at that time according to this particular plan. That was the man In his heart was burdened just like mine

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So as I was speaking with John We're going back and forth. He said that's what you're looking for. I said, that's exactly what I've been looking for. It's what I always look for. Because when I look out and I see you, rest assured that when I go to bed at night,

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I'm thinking about you.

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And the people who serve with me

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should be doing the same thing. Because your care, the concern for you, matters more than my care and my concern for me Not because I'm a great man. It's because I follow one In his name is Christ Jesus And when Paul says imitate me as I imitate Christ, can I tell you it's not easy because you have to die to yourself

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every moment of every day But can I tell you something else There's no place else. I'd rather be because he carries me in ways I never thought possible and he carries me through things that I don't understand. So it's important that when we look at this we see that God didn't just pick anybody. He picked a man who would share

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his burdens. Let me ask you a question this morning. Do you share the Lord's burdens? When you look around and see what's happening in the world, the suffering that's taking place in so many different places, can I tell you something? I know we say, well, you know, I'm concerned, but does your concern move you to action? Are you willing to be that person who no longer thinks about what your next adventure is going to be,

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but focused on others coming to not only know him, but to grow in him. See, Nehemiah was in a comfortable spot, but he said, what's going on with my people? When's the last time you cried out for the church? And when I say cry out,

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I'm not talking about in the ten minutes you pray at home I'm talking about cried out to the point to where people around you wondered what the heck was wrong with you Because you seem to be so moved Because as we will continue to see as we go through this letter that when he shows up before the king the king could look At him and see the concern on his face How about us?

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Are we concerned about the next game we're gonna go to? Or the next thing we're going to see? The next thing we're gonna do? Or the next trip we're going to take? Or the next whatever? One thing's for sure, you don't have to study biblical history to figure me out. I'm gonna say the same thing over and over again. That we focus too much on ourselves and not enough on God. But can I tell you where I got that from? The 66 books that you're holding in front of you

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Because if we pull back just long enough to look at biblical history We'll see that God's always looking for those who are willing to put him in his will love their own And can I tell you what? He's not looking for the great theologian He's not looking for the great orator. He's not looking for the most famous. He's just looking for an ordinary dude who's willing to be used by Him in an extraordinary way. Never taking credit for it and always surrendering to Him in light of it.

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That's what we're going to see in Nehemiah. He's going to pull off a feat that is phenomenal that he could not have done if God would not have been moving on him. this morning is as you've been listening to me. That you get excited about where we're going. Because there are a lot of things going on in the world. There's a lot of attacks going on against the church. Beloved, we need to be mindful of what's happening. What's happening to the church here in the West. Talk about

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civil unrest. There's a lot of infighting within the churches here, just just in the West. We don't like something, we just go somewhere else. We just keep shifting instead of growing. We want to find comfort. You know that Nehemiah name means, Nehemiah name means Yahweh is comfort or the comfort of Yahweh. If you're desiring the comfort of God, can I tell you something? You might get uncomfortable because Nehemiah was uncomfortable yet he had the comfort of God and we're going to see that play out as we begin to walk through

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this letter. So, I want to challenge you to read through it. Start reading through it as I am walking through it. Because God desires to use a person who has a burden for his people and a vision for his commitment to his purpose. Nehemiah is going to do something more than just build a wall. He's going to be used by God to continue his purpose. Can I tell you something? Isn't that what we desire to do? So if we draw our last breath and we were used by God just in a continuation of his purpose. Not so somebody can build a monument of us. Not

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so somebody can say this or say that. Just so that we could know that we continued his purpose. Can I tell you there's nothing greater than that? That's my desire, to be able to continue His purpose as we continue to move through. That's your introduction to the book of Nehemiah. And my prayer is over the next several months as we walk through it, that Yahweh will be your comfort. comfort, but even greater than that, I pray that He changes something on the inside of each and every one of us. That that precious Holy Spirit that's been

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deposited within us, sometimes we just allow to grow a little bit of rust because we're not willing to move when He says move. As I said to John when I spoke to him on Saturday, he said something to me about a month ago, and it actually really wasn't a compliment. And I said, that one thing you said to me affected me. I couldn't stop thinking about it.

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I couldn't stop thinking about it. I couldn't stop thinking about it, not because I thought you were right, but because I needed to know am I teachable I

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Pray that we all find ourselves in that place

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Because can I tell you something? That's truly when you see God moving and Then through you he can build in an extraordinary way He just needs us to get out of the way proven time and time again through biblical history that I'm sovereign and I will accomplish my purpose and my word that I send it to do will accomplish everything that I send it to do and so all we need to do is continue to place

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our faith and our trust in him amen we're gonna close by partaking in the Lord's Supper so if you could just stand with me I want you to think about what you just heard today. And I know that it's sometimes hard to draw back our minds to a history lesson. But some men will be coming down the aisles and they will be handing out the communion. So during this time I want to ask you to do something. Do me a favor. Is Yahweh your comfort?

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Are you open to hearing from Him? You see, what we're about to do in partaking of the Lord's Supper is remember. We're going to remember Him again, part of biblical history.

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So as they begin to pass communion cup around, I want you to think about where you at. Where am I at?

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I see that God continues to move. I see that God continues to show up and reorder things in ways I never thought possible. Lord, I want my heart to be burdened just as Yours is, because I know that it's not a burden I carry alone. As you prepare to partake, where is your heart? The Scriptures are clear that the partaking of communion is for the believer.

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If you're not the believer, if you haven't turned to Jesus, if you haven't repented of your sins, if you haven't said, Jesus, I want you to come into my life, to walk in me. I want to be able to live for you. If I haven't turned from my sins, confessed my sins, sought the face of God, then it's okay not to partake. It doesn't make you any better or worse than anybody in this room. And actually if you partake in an unworthy manner, the scriptures are clear about that. So for the believer who may not be walking in the manner in which he should, repentance isn't once

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it's ongoing. And in this moment you can stop and you can just say Lord this heart of mine that stands in your grace forgive me. And he is just to forgive Because this is the God that we serve. The desire is for us to remember not just His birth, not just His death, but three days later He walked out of that tomb and ascended to heaven. And because of that, we have life.

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Biblical history continues to teach us. And if we continue to go to the well, we'll find that it never runs dry. So it's with this in mind, that as our Lord sat with the disciples, during that faithful night that we call the Last Supper, He gave instruction to them as He spoke, as they were trying to understand what was about to take place. He instituted something for them to remember.

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To remember.

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He wants us to remember Him. So He took from that loaf, and He broke from the bread, and He handed it to His disciples, and He said, take and eat, for this is my body.

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And as He poured into the cup the blood that would soon

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run for every last one of us, His desire is that we would name His name as Savior and Lord

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of our lives.

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So as He poured and handed to his disciples, he said, take and drink for this is my blood. For as often as we eat of this table and drink of this cup, we do so until he returns. Father, I thank you for this morning. And I pray Lord that as what may have appeared to be a history lesson

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Lord was really a description of the nature of you Father we want to know you

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We want to grow in you One honor your son So help us Lord to not only share in your heart, but in every way to imitate our Savior, Lord, God, and King, whose heart for us we saw when he gave up

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his life on the cross. We thank you for the book of Nehemiah. We thank you for the journey we're about to undertake. Burden our hearts for the church, for our brothers and sisters. Let it not just be lip service, but move us to action. Let us not just take an interest, but let us involve ourselves in the affairs of your

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church as you continue to work out the affairs of this world. We so love you. We can do nothing without you. So as you touch, as you heal, as you protect, as you preserve, as you comfort, we ask above all that you save. For there, eyes are open,

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a symphony of thanksgiving goes up to our Savior and Lord, to your Son, through the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ. As we cry out, Hallelujah, for you alone are worthy of all the glory, all the honor, all

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the praise.

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This is the prayer of your church, and we ask these things in the mighty name of the Lord Jesus we pray, and let the body of Christ say, Amen. Hug somebody before you leave. Hug somebody before you leave.

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really.

Transcribed with Cockatoo