

Nehemiah 2-3

Sunday 10/5/2003

SEC: Introduction and Sermon Philosophy

I hate being dressed up when you don't feel good. I just like to wear my pajamas this morning. Well, I have a certain aura I have to hold up here. No, I'm fine. It'll be fine. Once you get preaching, you get... I don't know if you know this or not, most of you probably do, when you're saved, you get the Holy Spirit of God. You get indwelt with the Holy Spirit of God. Well, that doesn't mean you're always filled with the Holy Spirit of God. But you know that when the Holy Spirit of God is present, there can be no sickness. So when you get filled with the Spirit of God to preach or whatever, you don't feel sick anymore. That's the way it is with me. I've been dead dog sick sometimes, and I get up there preaching and I just feel like I'm fine. I tried just preaching all day one time just so I'd feel good all the time, but then I wore myself out and I was too tired to do anything else. So that didn't work either.

But anyway, we're just going to have fun in the Word of God today. Nehemiah 2 and 3. We're going to conclude our study in the book of Nehemiah today. I don't know how most guys do their stuff they preach, but I'm the kind of guy that when I'm preaching this on Nehemiah, this is not something that I just sat down and said to myself, "Well, I need to preach something." I don't think I'll go to the book of Nehemiah and find out. Twenty years ago, maybe even longer than that, God showed me what I've been teaching you out of the book of Nehemiah. I try never to preach or teach anything that I haven't lived or tried to live or at least tried to put into effect.

A lot of guys get a sermon and preach it because it sounds good or it carries the impact with it of being right and being good. I guess that's okay. But for me, that kind of stuff just never worked. I don't want to teach anything that I know doesn't work. Now, I know all the Bible is good. And I know there's a lot in the Bible that I haven't accomplished or done that I could teach you. But when it comes to building a church, things that we need to have, I want something that I know that's going to work.

Twenty-some years ago, I sat down and God showed me through the book of Nehemiah. I was laying out, really, I was laying out the order of the books. I wasn't even looking for this. I was coming through and looking how the order of the books, starting with Ezra and Nehemiah, Esther and Job, and in Psalms, really picture the pre-millennial coming of the Lord Jesus Christ from the captivity in a doctrinal sense, just by the order of the books. In the process of that, I began to see some things. I even began to see how the book of Ezra is a picture of how you build your body. We're going to talk about that when we start our next series. But then I saw how the book of Nehemiah is a picture of how you build a church. I started putting it all together and it really changed my life and outlook of, "If you're going to do something for God, do it biblically." I guess that's the thing that I'm trying to get across to you. The study, as far as I'm concerned, has been the same plan that I've always used all my life. And it'll work.

There are all kinds of theories today on how you build a church. You find churches go into the place where they've kind of stooped down and let the world in and still want to call it okay and all that, because they want to reach people. I'm still old-fashioned enough to believe that the

same way that worked back in the Apostle Paul's time, in the book of Acts, the same way it works today. Jesus said, "If I be lifted up, I will draw all men unto me." I think that's the problem. I think that we as churches try to draw people. I'm not saying we shouldn't invite people, but I'm going to tell you the greatest calling card we have, and probably always have, is what we preach: the Word of God. Let that always be the thing that draws people.

I never want them to come because of our elegant cantatas that we have, or especially if Jimmy's leading them; we don't want that to take place. No, you did a good job today, Jimmy. You're a good man. Or if I was leading them. Or our multimedia presentation, which we were going to do this morning, but the batteries are dead. All of those things are things that we don't have. I'm sorry, we don't have a screen that puts the Bible verses up so you don't have to bring your Bible. You have to bring your Bible here. Shame, shame, shame, shame. What a thing. I could never understand going to church without your Bible. It's like going to a gas station to get gas without your car. It just never made any sense to me. It's just weird.

So anyway, all we have is the book. I'm going to tell you something right now: the book is enough. We'll build it on that. And God will bless it. God has blessed it. For what we've done in a short time, God has given us some incredible people. There is not a service that we have had that there hasn't been somebody here for the first time. Last week we had four or five couples here, all excited, saying they're coming back. In fact, I had a Bible study set up last week with one of them, and it didn't work out because somebody got sick. We're probably going to do it this week, just things to get into people's lives.

SEC: Review of the Nehemiah Study

Anyway, we're going to close our study in the book of Nehemiah today. It's been a good study. We looked at the nine gates: the Sheep Gate, the Fish Gate, the Old Gate, the Valley Gate, the Dung Gate, the Fountain Gate, the Water Gate, the Horse Gate, and the East Gate. We looked at all of those and saw how those are avenues, those are openings that a church needs to have or represent biblical principles that a church needs to be aware of and teaching that people can come in.

We looked behind the scenes and we saw how God had the right men and women in the right place at the right time. We saw how the people that wanted to start and build Jerusalem, like the people that need to start to build a church, had the right burden. They had the right prayer. They had the right understanding. They knew what God was doing.

And then, for the last couple of weeks, we talked about how when you really get in your mind that you're going to do what's right and you really get in your mind that you're going to really serve God, opposition is going to come. We talked about what to expect. Basically, understand that growth comes through opposition. The key to opposition is understanding it. Most of us are not afraid of things we don't understand. It's the things that we don't understand, the reason why, the dark, the actually unknown, that make us afraid. When you understand that opposition is just part of the Christian life, and I know that Christianity today, for the most part, has taken that away. We think that it's a bad thing. It's not a bad thing when it comes because you're doing what's right and living right; it's a good thing.

SEC: God, The Great Bookkeeper: Life as an Investment

So today, we're going to close our study. Next week, as I promised, we're going to start a study, and I don't know how long it'll take us, but we're going to show you how to build a relationship with God. I'm going to go back to the very beginning. I'm going to talk about some things. We have put together in our former life a pretty good concept of discipleship. Right now, we're retooling some discipleship lessons. But I want to tell you right up front, I have rethought my aspect of discipleship. I have rethought what discipleship is. And I've come to some conclusions that God showed me that I never saw before, and that I think I missed before. We're going to start with that. I'm going to start talking about discipleship next week. And then we're going to start talking about how do you build a relationship with God? I'm not going to just give you a simple little formula. I'm going to take you through the Word of God and show you piece by piece. If you want to begin to build a relationship with God, how do you do it?

We've got a lot of new Christians here. And we've got a lot of people that are coming in that are telling me, "Bob, I want to build. I want to have a Christian marriage. I want to be a Christian mom. I want to do what's right with my kids." Those are the people we have a responsibility to, to really ground them in the Word of God. And I'll tell you what, it's not going to hurt us old folks to go through it again, too. Your relationship with Christ is something that always needs to be fine-tuned. You never get to the place, or at least I don't ever get to the place, where I say, "I don't need that. I've got that down." The time you think you've got it down, it's got you down. You don't have it down.

The Bible is a unique book anyhow. Every time you read through it, God shows you things that He hadn't showed you before. That's just a marvelous concept of the Bible. So we're going to talk about how to build your relationship. Just like the study on the book of Nehemiah, when I study something in the Bible, I take it apart. I look at all the pieces. I think the greatest gift that God has given me the ability to do is to take something that is absolutely complicated and see it in its basic form and uncomplicated. The Bible may look complicated, but I'm telling you something: if you break the Bible down into its basic components, it's very simple. It staggers us because we look at it. "Wow, there's 31,171 verses. There's 1,199 chapters." It staggers us because it's so thick. It's so big. It's so heavy. When you break it down and you see it in every aspect, it becomes very user-friendly.

When I studied the book of Nehemiah and I came through these gates, God showed me one great thing, a great thing that God showed me. I haven't even preached to you yet. We're going to talk about that today. It's something that overwhelmed me. There are things in the Bible that you're reading that are good. There are things in the Bible that you're reading that are exciting. But then there's that time in the Bible where you read something and it just kind of knocks the wind out of your sails. You just got to sit back and you got to say, "Wow. That was profound." Usually it's nothing big as far as, "The end of the world's coming October 6, 19..." It's not like that. It's just something that you never thought about. But the reality of its truth hits home with that particular point in your life. Wow, it's an incredible thing. That's the way I got to do it. I got to break it down and look at it.

If I was going to break Nehemiah down in the study we just did, if I was going to break it down into three or four things, that's how I remember things. Obviously, you're not going to remember everything that I've taught you. But if you can remember four major things from what I taught you, then you got it. Then you go back and put the rest of it together later.

1. The first thing I want you to remember is the fact that the gates are key. Those gates, those nine gates—we know that nine being the number of fruit-bearing—those nine gates are absolutely essential for your life and for my life as far as Christians in the church.
2. The second thing I want you to remember is that God always puts the right people in the right place at the right time. He always does.
3. The third thing I'd have you remember is the fact that opposition will always come when you're going to start to take a stand to do what's right with God.
4. The fourth thing, and this is what I'm going to talk about this morning, this is probably the most profound thing to me. Maybe it isn't to you, but things like this really get to me. The fourth thing that I look at in this whole thing that I see is not only are the gates the key, not only did God have the right man, the right time, the right place, the right people, opposition will obviously come, but the most amazing thing as I look down through this chapter is the thing that's probably the most unapparent. That is simply this: that through all this thing, God was keeping a record of who was doing what. That overwhelms me.

A long time ago, I noticed how God is a great bookkeeper. God is a great statistician. God is a great bookkeeper. I know that because the Bible says, if you just take it and come through the Bible—and it's a study again, it is an incredible study—I was telling you last week, if you wanted to study how to be a friend of God, study the two men that were friends of God and all of those things. Jan here was telling me she started that study, coming up with all these great things that God showed her. That's the way you do it. There are things through the Bible that you see that if you just follow them out, they're quite incredible.

For instance, you realize the Bible says that God has a record of your wanderings. Now, wanderings in the Bible are not good. Wanderings are not what you do. But the Bible says God has a record of our wanderings. You realize the Bible says that God not only has a record of our wanderings, but the Bible says that He has a bottle for your tears. What in the world does God want tears in a bottle for? Well, maybe at the Judgment Seat of Christ, this thing is going to get much more detailed than we always thought it would. It might just be that God right now is keeping a record of the things that you weep for.

Wouldn't it be a terrible, tragic thing, once you know all that you're supposed to know about the Bible, and all you know about God, and all that God does, wouldn't it be a terrible thing if you got to the Judgment Seat of Christ and found that you wept more for some soap opera or some sad movie that you saw on television than you did for people lost and dying and going to hell? Do God's people even weep for people lost and going to hell anymore? We wonder why we can't get people to come to church or can't get people saved. Maybe the problem is not them, maybe the problem is us. Maybe we are so indifferent to where people are at and so indifferent to this world because we're so part of it for so long that we don't weep. The Bible says, "He that goeth forth bearing precious seed weeping."

I'm not saying... I have a tough time with people, especially preachers, every time they get to the pulpit, they cry about something. I know that emotion is, but I'm telling you something: the Bible simply says God has a bottle for your tears. And then I'll tell you something else: the Bible says that God's got a book for your thoughts. And then the Bible says that He's got a bag for your transgressions. So when I see that God has a record of my wanderings and a bag for my transgressions, a bottle for my tears, and a book for my thoughts, I come to the conclusion that God's keeping a record.

When I come to this chapter, it's an incredible thing. One of the things that struck me a number of years ago is the fact that I realized—and maybe you already know that—that Proverbs 15:6 says:

Proverbs 15:6

In the house of the righteous is much treasure: but in the revenues of the wicked is trouble.

You know what that tells me? That tells me that everything in this life for you and for me is an investment. That tells me that once I get saved, what I do with my life from that point on is an investment. I either make an investment in the things of God or I make an investment in the things of the world. It's real simple: you either make good investments or you make bad investments.

I find people all the time in the secular world that made no preparation for their retirement. They don't have any retirement fund for whatever reason. Many times they had nothing to do with it; they lost everything or whatever in a stock market or something. But there are people out there, I know Christians, that never planned for their future because they were sure that Christ was going to come back before they had to retire. Well, I'm all for Christ coming back. But the Bible says, "Occupy till I come." You're not supposed to take that fatalist position. Maybe He won't come in your lifetime. Or maybe you'll die and your wife and kids will have to go on without you. What are you going to do? You have to prepare for those things. But you see, those are immature things that people don't really think all the way through.

Simply this: I know God's people that when they got to be 65, 70 years old, they had nothing. All they had was Social Security, whatever that would come up to be. You know why? Because they never planned. They never planned for their retirement in a physical sense. I'm telling you something: God's people today don't understand in a spiritual sense that right now with your life, you're making an investment with it. And that investment is going to pay off sometime at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

SEC: The Parable of the Pounds: Investing for Eternity

Turn over to Luke 19. A great passage. In Luke 19, He tells you a story. We'll start in Luke 19:12. He says this:

Luke 19:12

He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return.

Anytime you find that in the Bible, that nobleman, that king, sometimes He's in a far country, sometimes He's on a journey, I'm telling you right now in the Gospel, it's going to be a picture of Christ leaving. While He leaves us down here in the Church Age, it's going to be that way. Especially in the book of Luke, because the book of Luke is the book that focuses toward the Gentiles. It always does.

Luke 19:12

A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return.

A picture of Christ going to heaven. He's going to come back.

Luke 19:13

And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come.

The number ten shows up here. I said that Luke is the book that deals with Gentiles. Number ten in the Bible is the number of the Gentiles. When you come down through here, you're going to find that these servants have ten pounds. The ten keeps showing up all the way through here, ten being the number of the Gentiles. The first Gentile kingdom is found in Genesis 10. The father of Gentiles is Noah; he's the tenth in the line from Adam. You'll find it all the way through. You'll find the last Gentile kingdom represented by the ten toes of Daniel. And on and on it goes. It's a thing that the Gospel goes to the Gentiles in Acts 10. The missionary call to the Gentiles in Romans 10. John 10, you find Him talking about Gentile sheep and not of this fold. When Isaac, when we talk about it Thursday night, when Isaac wanted a bride, they got him a bride of the Gentiles and there's ten camels associated with it. Ten in the Bible is the number of the Gentiles. So it's no accident when you get into Luke 19:12, and it says:

Luke 19:12

Therefore a certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return.

Luke 19:13

And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come.

He's talking about Gentiles. He's talking about the Church Age, and He's a picture of you and me.

Luke 19:14

But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us.

Luke 19:15

And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading.

Judgment Seat of Christ, Millennium, here it comes, He's received the kingdom.

Luke 19:16

Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds.

Luke 19:17

And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities.

Luke 19:18

And the second came, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds.

Luke 19:19

And he said likewise to him, Be thou also over five cities.

Luke 19:20

And another came, saying, Lord, behold, here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin:

Luke 19:21

For I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that thou layedst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow.

'Austere' means a very serious, stern man.

Luke 19:22

And he saith unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow:

Luke 19:23

Wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury?

'Usury' means interest.

Luke 19:24

And he said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds.

Luke 19:25

(And they said unto him, Lord, he hath ten pounds.)

Luke 19:26

For I say unto you, That unto every one which hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him.

Picture the Judgment Seat of Christ.

Now here's the picture, here's the story, let me break it down for you. The Lord goes back to heaven, He gives you certain things. He talks about pounds here; when you get over to another parable, He talks about talents, the same story. Talents. One's Jewish money, one's English money. Pounds. You have an English Bible. Luke is the chapter of the Gentile. So it's pounds for you. He gives them, the Bible likens it to pounds, money. We don't have to dislike it to money; we've likened it to God has given you things. While He's gone, you are to exercise those things, you are to make investments on those things. Very frankly, whatever you are today to God is simply based on the investment that you've made in your life in the Word of God. It's as simple as that.

Whatever you are today, here's a story of two men. They're both given pounds, and one of them does something with it and makes wise investments. At the Judgment Seat of Christ, he gets it all. The other one doesn't do anything with it, and he loses everything that he has. Right now, today, your life is simply like that. Your life today, wherever you're at spiritually—and I don't know, but I know this—your life today is simply where it's at based on the investment that you have made with what God has given you. It's as simple as that. And your kids are the same way. Your kids will be whatever investment you have made in their life. You are exactly today what your investment as a child of God has been in the Word of God.

Malachi 3:16 simply says this:

Malachi 3:16

Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name.

God is keeping the record of what you're doing with the investment that God has given you. God called you, God saved you, and He saves you with a purpose. He endowed you with the Holy Spirit of God and gave you a personality and gave you abilities. Those abilities you have that God gave you are for one reason: that is to glorify and honor the Lord Jesus Christ. Whatever investments you make in your life for Him, you're compounding with interest what God has given you.

I shouldn't say some of you, I don't believe anybody here is like that. Someday we are going to be like that. Unfortunately, that's the beauty about us right now. Right now, I don't know of anybody we have that isn't good people. We don't have... I hear, I talk to a couple other

preachers, and they're always complaining about their people. Man, I don't have anybody to complain about. We don't have to hire some people to complain about. We don't have anybody to complain about. But that isn't always going to be. I'm sorry, it's nice, we live in a little bubble right now and it's all great. But you wait until the first wicked witch of the west shows up. It'll happen sooner or later. They're probably driving around looking for us right now, but they'll hit here sooner or later. And we'll have to deal with that when it comes.

But I couldn't be happier. My wife and I talk about it all the time, how much we love the people. Everybody loves everybody. It's just one of those things that this is a very, if you don't feel this and know this yet, this is a very unique and special place that God has put together here. It really is. And I count myself privileged to be a part of it. None of us deserve this, but God has been good to us. But what I'm saying is this: to whom much is given, much is required. I'm just telling you, we need to look at this and understand this. In spite of everything that God is doing and the great people that are here, the Bible says that God is keeping the record. You and I are the investment of what we've done with the Word of God.

I'm going to tell you right now, in all my years of studying the Word of God, in all my years of dealing with people, in all my years of doing everything that I've done with the Word of God, I have only found two things that are worth investing your life in, because they are the only two things going to last for all of eternity. One of them is the Word of God, and the other one are the souls of men. I do not know of any other things in this world that are worth investing in.

Now, we all have to work. We all have to have jobs. We all have to do this. We all have to do that. We all have to mow the lawn. We all have to feed the dog. We all have to walk the dog. There are things we have to do. That is part of occupying till He comes. But what happens is—and this is my point today, what happened, and this is what you're going to see—we haven't gotten to the message yet. This is all introduction. What you're going to see in this chapter, in this story, is exactly what happens to God's people. Now, it hasn't happened to anybody here yet that I know of. But I'm telling you, there are people out there that it has happened to, and they're going to come be part of it at some point, and it could happen to you. It could happen to me. What I'm trying to tell you today, first of all, is that God, in this little church, with what we've got and what we're doing, God is keeping the record of who's doing what. You and I today are nothing more than the investment of what you and I have done with the Word of God. We've looked at the gates, the right man, the right place, the right people. Opposition will come, and now we must look at the fact that God is keeping the record.

SEC: Three Kinds of Workers in God's Church

I don't know if you ever saw this or not. Come back to Nehemiah now. This is one of these things where, as you read through here, it just... they're here. I saw them one time when I was studying this thing, and I just had to... it's one of those things that just took the wind out of me. Maybe to you it isn't a big deal. I don't know. But to me, when I see what's going on, and I see all the opposition, and I see all that God's trying to accomplish, and I see the good people trying to do it, to me this just overwhelms that God, without a doubt, is the most fair, understanding Being that

the world has ever seen. He is worthy. He is worthy of the investment that you and I need to make in His life, in our lives. I'm just telling you.

I heard somebody say one time, there are three kinds of people in a church, and I tend to believe this. Now, we don't have these three kinds yet. We only have the one kind as far as I know. I'm saying that right now, but I'm not always going to be able to say that. But I mean it right now. I heard somebody say, years ago, three kinds of people in a church:

- People who make things happen.
- People who watch what happens.
- People who don't have a clue what's happening.

In your experience in life, isn't that true? That's true. I preached that one time in a church. I forget where I was. And I said, 'Isn't that true?' And the lady in that row, she says, 'Yeah, my husband looks like that.' Well, we don't want to get that detailed in the thing. But I'm telling you, you've been around for a while. John, isn't that true? Stephen, that's true. Jimmy, isn't that true? You guys, isn't that true? It's true. Phil, isn't it true? It's true. Scotty, isn't it true? John, isn't it true? Barbie, isn't it true? Barb, isn't it true? It's true. Okay. It's true. I'm telling you, that's an unbelievably profound thing. There are people who make things happen. There are people who just watch what happened. And then there are people who don't have a clue what's happening. I'm going to tell you something in this chapter, in this story, of what God is doing, and all the excitement, and all the corralling of events and putting things in the right place, the thing that overwhelmed me more than anything else was the fact that God was looking at that little work and watching what was happening and who was doing what, and God's keeping a record.

The Sanctified Worker (Nehemiah 3:1)

Let me show you what I mean. Look at Nehemiah 3:1.

Nehemiah 3:1

Then Eliashib the high priest rose up with his brethren the priests, and they builded the sheep gate; they sanctified it, and set up the doors of it; even unto the tower of Meah they sanctified it, unto the tower of Hananeel.

Here's a group of people when they worked. They sanctified what they did. What does 'sanctified' mean? Sanctification, or sanctified, means 'set apart.' That's simply what it means. When I read that down through here, and I take this in the context of what I'm already looking at, you know what it tells me? Here's a group of people when they were doing the work on these gates. Here's a group of people within this church. Here's a group of people within any church that understood what they were doing and realized that God's work was separate from everything else they did.

The first problem we get into as God's people is we think that coming to church, doing something for God, is on the same par as going to work, or going to the Chiefs game, or going to this thing, or going to a birthday party, or going here, or going there. It's not. I'm not saying all those things aren't important. I'm not saying you shouldn't have them. You ought to go to a Chiefs game. You ought to go play golf. You ought to have fun with life and get some breaks in life and

do some fun things every chance you can with your wife, with your family, however the case, together, however you can do it. You need that. But I'm telling you, in your mind, keep it separate from the work of God. Because there is nothing more important. There is nothing more in this world. There is nothing more important than understanding and sanctifying what you do for God, for what you do with yourself and for the rest of things in life.

I love people. I'd do anything to help anybody. I enjoy doing things. But when it comes to the work of God, I have to make some decisions. I have to say, 'I'm not going to go there. I'm not going to do that because I'm going to be too wiped out on Sunday morning. I'm going to be too this. I'm going to be too that. I can't go there because I need to spend time getting this thing ready.' There's nothing wrong with doing this. There's nothing wrong with going here. It isn't like it's something bad that I'm going to, but I have to realize first things first, and the first thing in my life is my investment with Him.

Now, that doesn't mean that I don't go do things. Honestly, you've got to come to the place when you make that decision, and you can make that decision, you can get away with some things. I mean, if somebody... I'll give you a great example. Where's she at? Where's my buddy at? Christor. Christor. I hope you don't mind me saying this. You had your bachelorette party last night, didn't you? What time did you get home? One o'clock in the morning. I don't care. That's fine. Mothers too. Then mother, mother, you both get starved for this. One o'clock in the morning. I'm going to tell you something. I'm not picking on them, because they're sinners like everybody else, but I'm going to tell you something. You know how many people that go home one o'clock in the morning wouldn't bother getting up to come to church on Sunday morning? I'm not sure I would. I'm just telling you. I'm not picking on them. I'm not holding them up better than anybody else. You're all that way, but I just... it just came to my brain, because I asked you what time you got home last night, because I was looking at the car to make sure you guys got home okay, you and Pam, and I didn't see you. So I asked you. That's the point that was in my brain, right?

There's nothing wrong with having a bachelorette party. She just has a little Chip 'n Dale there. But they didn't call Phil and I to do that, so we knew they weren't. This is my point. There's nothing wrong with that. But I'm telling you something: if you're not disciplined to the place in your life where you say to yourself, 'This is more important,' it'll just creep into your life. I'm telling you. These people, the first one that he talked about, and oh, where do you see the next two? But these people, they sanctified their work. What does that mean? It means that they realized that everything else they were doing, they understood that their investment for the Lord of their life was number one.

Now, does it mean you can hit it 100% all the time? That doesn't mean that there won't be something that goes real late that you don't make. I'm saying it's an attitude. It's something that you realize, 'I'm going to go do this. But this is not going to take away from what God has for me over here.' That's all I'm saying. That was a primitive example right there. But that's where it's at.

I'll give you a personal one. I like astronomy. I like to spend... I go out. I just spent all night long looking at the stars, taking pictures, just having a ball. Before we started this church, every Saturday night when we were going to church, it didn't start till like 11 o'clock. So I had plenty of time. I'd stay out all night long till four o'clock in the morning, come home, sleep till nine, ten o'clock, get up. We'd go to church and no problem. I enjoyed that. There was nothing wrong with that. I wasn't peeping in somebody's window. I'm looking at the stars. I was having fun. Chris used to go with me. Many of you went with me. We had fun together. But when I realized that I had to be accountable on Sunday morning, I don't go anymore. Not that I don't like it. Not that I don't want to. The bottom line is this is the most important thing in my life. And I cannot sacrifice not being sharp. I can't be up here being in a daze any more than I already am. I can't afford not to be prepared because I'm asking you to sanctify everything you do and build in the right place. I have to do it. That's the way it is.

Now, that doesn't mean that I won't go someplace sometime. That doesn't mean if something doesn't come up as a special thing. I'm saying it's an attitude. These people had an attitude. They looked at the gate they were building and they set it apart from everything they did in their life. And they said, 'This is God's work. This comes first.' They looked at what they did as something special. They didn't get the work with the gate confused with everything else they did. They kept it separate. They realized that their work was an investment for God and they were going to invest everything they could and make the very best investment. That's all God's asking. That's all I'm asking. That's what I'm going to do. I just want my life to be the very best investment for Him that it can be. When the Judgment Seat of Christ comes back, when He comes back, I don't want Him taking what I've got away and giving it to somebody else. I want to be the best investment, and it starts by understanding that what you're doing is sanctified. It's separate. It's something that is different than anything else you do because it is the only thing, the only investment that's going to last for all of eternity.

I hope the Chiefs beat Denver to pieces today. I do. I really do. When I get out of here, I'm not going out to eat with anybody. And Pam, I'm not even going to my favorite Mexican place, El Gaucho's. Think about it. I'm going to go home and I'm going to watch them beat them. I used to have a cup of coffee this morning when I came back someplace and there were people already. I saw this guy. You've got to be a fanatic to have Denver Broncos things painted on the side of your family car. And they're pulling in Quick Trip. I'm coming out and I see this guy with a big Denver head painted on his face. It looked like he went to a 20th Century Fox makeup artist. He looked good, but he spent some time and the game doesn't even start till 12. This is seven o'clock this morning. This guy's got his game face on. He walked out. He looked and said, 'Hello.' And I said, 'Hi, how are you doing?' 'Yeah. All right.' I'm thinking to myself, 'Wow, that guy really did it.' But I love things like that. I hope they whip them. I like the races over at the Speedway. I've never been to one, but we had to make a class activity and go to the race or something. I just like to drive over there and park off the side road just to let them suckers go around that track. That's loud. I enjoy things like that. I do. But it doesn't give a flip compared to eternity.

You think when we get to heaven, we're up there, we're praising the Lord and we're having a great time and we're thinking about everything that God did and all those things. We're looking

at all the things that God did with our church and individual lives. Any one of you going to say to me, 'Boy, wasn't that a great Chiefs game they had back there then?' I don't think so. Now, is it okay to enjoy it now? Sure. Absolutely. Have fun. You like to bowl? Go after it, man. Whatever. Fish. Bring the preacher some fish. But I'm telling you, not compared to eternity. When you get to the Judgment Seat of Christ, it isn't going to be you comparing how long the bass was and how many were keepers. The only two things, ladies and gentlemen, that are worth investing our lives in are the only two things that are going to be eternal. One of them is this book, the Word of God, and the other one are the souls of men.

Now, I'm not a stick in the mud. There are many preachers who would tell you, 'Don't do anything else but do this.' That's not right either because you're not made that way. You can't. God made us that we have to have things in our lives that take off the pressure, that change, because we are human and because of the way we are. But the key is keeping it all in perspective. These first group, when they did their work, they sanctified it.

The Earnest Worker (Nehemiah 3:20)

Now, I'm going to show you another group. Nehemiah 3:20.

Nehemiah 3:20

After him Baruch the son of Zabbai earnestly repaired the other piece, from the turning of the wall unto the door of the house of Eliashib the high priest.

Here's a group, or here's a guy that led the group. They did their work and the Bible said they did it earnestly. There are people like that in churches. These people earnestly did the work. Good people come to church. They tithe. They help out. They'll do whatever it needs to be done. I've seen them like that all my life. They really do. But the problem is they never are able to separate it out. The bottom line is they really never see what's really going on. They never really understand.

I'll tell you, as far as I'm concerned, the thing that is missing in most of God's people's lives, the thing that is missing, is passion. We have passion for everything. Let me tell you something. When you're driving past the stadium today, what you will hear when you wind down your window is 80,000 impassioned people. If you go past the racetrack, what you'll hear is 100,000 impassioned people. Everywhere you go, people are impassioned by what they do. Nothing wrong with it. I have no problem with that at all. But how come when it comes to the Bible and God, God's people have no passion? There's not a time that I can open up my Bible and I begin to preach that the passion just doesn't come all over me. I don't know how these guys stand up there and just say, 'Let us turn today to the Bible. Let me read for you words of encouragement. Words that will move you. Words that will keep you. Words that will be words to you.' How do you do that?

Now, I can do that if I'm saying, 'Okay, open up your geography books today and let's talk about the history of Antarctica. In the beginning, it was cold. Later on, it was colder still. Today, really cold. Forecast for tomorrow, cold.' That's boring. I can do that. But when it comes to this, come on. This is the most exciting book the world has ever seen. We're living in the most exciting times

the world has ever seen. God has called us as a small group with nothing to do great things. You know what that means? That means we've got to rely on God totally and completely. We don't have a lot of things going for us. All we've got is one book and one God. And you know what? That's enough. I love it.

I'm telling you, you and I today are exactly the investment that we have made. I don't know what you do for a living. I really don't. Tell me I do, but I'm pretending I don't. But I know this: if you know, and if you've been saved two years or less, I'm just giving you a window here, don't even think of it. Don't even listen to this. I'm not talking to you. But I'm telling you this: if you know more about your job than you do the Word of God, there's something wrong someplace, unless you're on the path to change that. I don't know what you do for a living, but I know this: God didn't call you to do that for eternity. That's not your main function. That's not your main goal. You say, 'Well, I've got to make a living.' I didn't say you didn't. I'm just saying your attitude. You need to understand what is God's and what is supportive of that, that lets you do what God wants you to do.

I'm telling you, people who do the work earnestly, they're good people. They love the Lord, but there's no passion in what they do. And they look at everything they do as the same. They're there. They give their... they buy tape. They do everything. But inside their mind, they do not make a distinction. They do not sanctify the work of God versus what they do.

Honestly, maybe it's just me. I don't know. Maybe I'm dead wrong. I'll be the first. I don't know. I know for myself, God has put me through something and I've had some career changes in life. I had to teach. I had to learn some new trades. I no longer can tell the jokes that I used to joke about, 'My life breaks, I don't know how to fix.' I know how to fix it now. I can wire lights. I can find gas lines and phone lines down on the ground. I'm an expert at it. Four or five years. Never had a damage in my life. Always pinpointed them. Every contractor would say, 'Man, you're the greatest locator I ever saw. That's right on the money.' I said, 'What do you expect?'

I'm the kind of guy that I had to learn. It was hard. I had to learn. All the wiring diagrams... I looked at those. I got shocked a few times. I was working downtown one time and they had me working, and I'd been doing it for a while. The real electricians—I was never a real electrician—they work on those things when there's power running through them. We were working downtown in an office building and rewiring stuff. You can't just shut the whole building down because you don't want to get shocked. And I was up there and it was this big office, but I didn't even put any of the additions in, and they were telling me, 'Well, just tie all these wires into the hot wires.' And I said, 'Okay.' Well, nobody told me it was 280 volts. I think down in Potosi at the state prison, they electrocute you with only 110. This was 280. There's nothing worse than getting hit with 280. I'm not kidding. You're laughing. It's funny. Come up here. Stick your hand in here. I want you to quit that laughing. Go there. Get your finger in that. That hurts, man. 280. 110 is just a mosquito bite. You get zapped. 'Oh, I get that. Touch the hot wire.' Daddy touched 280. You could have thrown my arm down and I'd have spit out quarters like a slot machine. I was wired. I'm not kidding. I was reaching in this just like that, a receptacle, and it was wired for 280. And I had pliers. I still to this day don't know what happened. I heard the angels saying, 'Just as I am, come on home.' I was out for a minute. I was having the bodily presence of the

Lord. I looked down and God said, 'You want to go back?' And I said, 'I don't even know where I'm at.' It was wild. I get in there and I think and I started twisting them. I don't know what I did. I guess I grounded it out somewhere. Boy, did I ground out somewhere. I'll tell you, man. Next thing I know I'm laying across. It actually threw me across the thing, bounced off against the wall. I must have said something. I don't know what I said. But all the people that were working there, they all came rushing. They were going to call an ambulance. They thought I was dead. I thought I was dead. I hurt for two weeks. It went in and it goes up. Electricity is a weird thing. It went up my elbow and it jumped from my elbow into my chest. I didn't see it come up there, but my elbow hurt so bad. And I told my boss, I said, 'How come my elbow hurts?' And he's laughing. He said, 'Oh,' I said, 'I got hit with 280 one time.' He says, 'There's nothing worse than getting hit.' He says, '280 hurt.' I said, 'Oh, yeah. Tell me about it.' It hurts. My ribs were sore for two weeks. My guts were fried, man. When it went through me. I had to learn a lot of things, but I'm telling you right now, I still... I don't know. I gave up being an electrician. I don't know any more electricity. It's hard to hurt. I'm Italian. No matter what I do in life, there's only one thing I really know: this book. I don't want to be good at anything else better than this. That doesn't mean I won't have to do something else to make a living. But what I'm saying is I do not want to be better at anything I do than this book. I never want to get to the place that I just look at the ministry, the things of God, those eternal things, and see them just like I do going to work, going to the Chiefs game, going to high school, going to here, going to do this, going to do that, whatever. There's nothing wrong with those things. But I want my passion to be around eternal things. Eternal things.

The Uncommitted Worker (Nehemiah 3:5)

So then there's the third group. We had the group that sanctified the gate. We had the group that earnestly did the work, but there's no sanctification. There's no passion there. Then we had the last group, the third group. This is found in Nehemiah 3:5.

Nehemiah 3:5

And next unto them the Tekoites repaired; but their nobles put not their necks to the work of their Lord.

Some people just never understand what God did for them. I don't understand that. I love the wording here: 'put not their necks to the work of their Lord.' Look how personally it makes it: 'of their Lord.' There are some people who are saved and on their way to heaven who just never figure out what's going on. There are people that make things happen. There are people that watch things happen. And then there are people who don't have a clue what's happening. That's this crowd. That verse says it all. Christ is their Lord. They're working on the wall. They're working in a church. But they just never, never figure out that there's an investment of their lives. They're too busy having fun, too busy making money, too busy doing all the things that are okay to do, as long as you keep it in perspective.

SEC: The Importance of Eternal Perspective

In other words, I'm saying this: the key to the Christian life is perspective. It is understanding the parameters. It is understanding what is important. It is seeing the thing from God's standpoint. I'm telling you, there are God's people living on this planet Earth like they're going to live here for all of eternity. And that simply is not true. God has a plan. God has a program. And I'm telling you, God wants you and I as His people to make the right quality investments with the right time in our lives that God has given us. The Bible says in the book of Psalms, I think it's Psalms 90, that man's days are nothing more than three score and ten, 70 years. Now, some people live older than that.

I figured it up one time. I figured it up when you looked at that thing, and most people don't even get saved until they're 20 years old. So that only leaves 50 years. And then when you stop and really put the pencil to it and figure it out, you realize you sleep almost a third of that. And then I read somewhere where in a lifetime we spend five years eating. And I'm not even talking about the time that we stay out of fellowship or that we wander. I figured it out one time. On an average, probably on the average Christian with the average life, the average age that we live in, probably the very most that we can give the Lord that's really quality out of our lifetime is probably about 15 to 20 years.

If I was here this morning and I said to you, 'You give me \$20 and I'm going to give you \$1,000,' is there anybody here who wouldn't take that deal? Certainly we would. All day long. You know what God says? God says, 'Bob, people, I've saved you. The concept that we're going to work in is called a church. I could have had the Gospel go anyway. I could have made the birds that when they sang, they sang the Gospel story. Let me tell you something. If I rained bread from heaven, I could have rained Gospel tracts to tell everybody. I had Balaam's ass speak back there in the Old Testament. I could have made the animals speak and tell you they don't have any sin nature. They could have told you exactly about a Savior.' He used whales. He used Balaam's ass. He could have done any way He wanted. He said, 'I have chosen man to tell the story. Here's what I've asked for you. All I ask, you're on your way to hell. I presented a plan that you can live with Me forever. And we're going to have eternity together and we're going to spend together all of eternity. Never more tears. No more jobs. No more pain. No more backaches. No more sickness. No more nothing. We are just going to have one wild time around an absolute final authority and God for all of eternity. And the way you see the plan I got that you're going to be part of. Now, here's what I need. Eternity on this side, eternity on that side. Bob, I've carved out 7,000 years. Eternity on one end, eternity on the other. 7,000 years. I put a little parenthesis here because I've got a plan. And everybody in that time period from 1,000 right on up has a job, and your job is right here in the time that you live, from 1950 to the time you die. You're living right here right now. And this is my job.

Bob, sanctify what you do. Understand there's a difference. Understand, Bob, it's okay to hunt. It's okay to fish. It's okay to this. It's okay to that. There's nothing wrong with that. Go to the Chiefs game. Go look through your telescope. Go to this party. Go to that. Go to the birthday party. Have fun. Go to Jan's birthday party. Go do this. Go do that. But understand that what you do for Me is an investment and it's separate from everything else you do. Don't let all the

other good things that are okay come into the things and take from Me. Because, Bob, when it all comes down, said and done, you only got 15, 20 years that I need.

But I'll tell you this, Bob, stay focused. Stay focused. Find out what that book says. Don't let your job... don't let whatever you do... I'm sorry about getting shocked down there, but you needed that lesson that day. But don't let anything pull away from you from that book. Don't let your job... don't let this... Bob, look at that job for what it is. I've called you to do this. That job over there is just to support this. I've called you to do this. But I put you down here in this church. Your job: do a good job. Get promotions. Get raises. Get all the things. Get status. Because I'll pay you more money. You can do more for work out over here. And the whole spirit of influence works. But don't ever lose the perspective of it that your job over here is nothing more than to give you and prepare your way because you are a missionary to Me and your missionary is an Old Path Baptist Church. And we've got a job to keep it separate.

He says, 'Bob, you give Me those 15, 20 years and you keep it separate and you do the very best job you can. And when I come back, you take that pound I gave you and you invest that thing and give Me 10 pounds back. You know what I'll do? You give Me 20 years, I'll give you a thousand years over there. You give Me 20 years, 15 years down here, weeping, wailing in tears and putting up with all the crap. I'll give you a thousand years over there where you'll reign with Me as a king. And that's just for starters, Bob. Then we're going to jump into eternity. And man, look what I've got for you.' But I'll tell you what, Bob, I just can't take you there. I'm a just God and I'm a faithful God and I just can't get you out there to reward all the faithfulness of My people that have figured it out and also taking care of the ones that haven't figured it out.

Three kinds of people: people that make things happen, people that watch things happen, people don't know what's happening. Three kinds of people. One group sanctified the gate and their work. The other people that just dug it and got it done. The other people just did it half-heartedly and never put their necks. They weren't going to put their neck on the line. You know what it's going to take for you and for me? The Bible says a living sacrifice. He became a dead sacrifice. You're going to have to put your neck on the line for Him because He put His neck on the line for you. It's as simple as that.

When I saw that, to me, that was a crowning part. Because I'm human. And we're all human. None of us like to do things without recognition. It's okay. I know we say, 'Well, I'm...' No, no, no, no. It's... even if it's recognition from the Lord. You may say, 'Well, I don't want any man to tell me what a good job is,' but you want God to tell you. Because God will tell you the truth. Somebody may tell you and flatter you just because... to me, flattery is always like chewing gum. You've got to chew it for a while and get the flavor, but don't swallow it. Think about that. That's deep. Don't swallow it. Just chew it for a while. Enjoy it. But don't swallow it. Don't believe it. Unless it comes from God. Because when God comes down and says, 'You did a good job, Jim, Tom, you did a good job,' then you can take it. We all want that. And that's okay. Nothing wrong with that.

But I'm telling you this right now. It's coming today. When He's going to look down into your eyes and you're going to look into His eyes and for the first time in your life, you're going to fully

realize everything that He's done for you. A lot of you understand it now, but we don't understand it like we will then when we get the mind of Christ in us to the degree that we'll have it. And we see Him and we fully... that first look into His eyes where you fully understand what He did. What a thing. What a thing for Him to look down and to say to me or you, 'Well done, thou good and faithful servant. You were faithful over a little thing. Now I'm going to make you a ruler over many things.' Oh man, there's where it's at. You know what that is? That's perspective. That's understanding that God saved you for a purpose and saved you for a reason. God put us together for a reason. God put us in here and gave us a book that says about a church with nine gates, showed us our burden, showed us our prayer, showed us the opposition is going to come, and then showed, 'Bob, all while you're doing it, I'm watching what's going on. And I'm watching and I've got a book for your wanderings. I've got a bottle for your tears and I've got a book for your remembrance.' And I'm the great bookkeeper and everything, every sacrifice, every little thing behind the scenes that is done to enable God to do a better work in Old Path Baptist Church and in this city, God is writing it down. You only got so many years, folks, I'm just telling you, so many years. Giving them to Him will be the greatest investment you ever make in your life.

SEC: Conclusion and Prayer

Great Father, we thank You for this study. It's been a good study. Lord, help us to see, and I thank You, Father. First of all, that I don't have any of those other kinds of people right now. I can honestly say, and God is my witness, I believe this with everything that I have in me: I believe that everybody in our church is either on fire for God or wants to be, and that's fine. Right now I really believe that we don't have those second groups of people, but God help us not to get into the mindset where we lose sight of the three kinds of people that did this work, because they are the three kinds of people that do the work of God. Right now we're very fortunate because You pulled together in a very unique situation with very unique circumstances. You pulled together the cream of the crop as far as I'm concerned. Right now we may not have to worry about that, but Lord, never let us lose sight of those things that we've learned in this lesson. Thank You, Father. We pray today for the ones that are ill or out of town or sick, that You'll be with them. Thank You for those that are here today, and Lord, never let us look at anything else we do. Let us always gauge it and judge it based and sanctify it based on the greatest investments that we can make in the lives of men in the Word of God. We'll thank You and praise You in Jesus' name, for His sake we ask it. Amen.