

# *Expository Sermon Examples*



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**Acts 6:1-8 and 1 Timothy 3:8-13**

## **THE QUALITIES OF A BIBLICAL DEACON**

**Intro:** There are two offices in the church that have the distinction of requiring ordination. One is that of Pastor and the other is the office of the Deacon. Tonight, we have gathered in this place to set aside a Christian Brother for ordination as a biblical Deacon. Before we actually ask this Brother to come forward and kneel for the laying on of hands, we need to take a fresh look at what the Bible says about these special people in the church called Deacons.

The Bible is clear when it talks about why we have Deacons in the first place. **Acts 6** records a situation that arose in the early church where a certain element of the church felt neglected. The Apostles were not able to meet the need in the church and to carry out their pulpit ministries as well. Therefore, they appointed seven men to work among the people of the church so that they might be free to pray, study and prepare to preach the Word of God. The duties of the biblical Deacon have not changed over these 2,000 years. There is still a need for men in the church who will look after the day to day administration so that the Pastor might give himself fully to prayer and to the study of the Word of God.

We have read two passages this evening that speak about the biblical Deacon. I would like to take a look at both of these passages. I want to share with you what the Bible says about *The Qualities Of The Biblical Deacon*.

### **I. A BIBLICAL DEACON MUST BE A SAINT**

**(Note:** While this is not stated, it is certainly implied in the Bible. The biblical Deacon must be a saved man first and foremost - **Acts 6:3**.)

A. **There Must Be A Relationship To The Savior** - The church was commanded to "*seek out from among you*". That is, the men they chose were to be saved men, exclusively! Many churches have paid a terrible price for elevating unsaved men to positions of leadership in the church. Therefore, my friend, examine yourself to know for sure that you are truly saved, **2 Corinthians 13:5; 2 Peter 2:10**.

B. **There Must Be A Recognition By The Saints** - Notice that the saints were to "*choose*". They were to take men from among their own number. Men they had observed. Men they trusted. Men of honor and respect. This corresponds to a portion of the requirements of a Deacon listed in **1 Timothy 3:10**.

C. **There Must Be A Recommendation By The Spirit** - Notice that these men were to be "*full of the Holy Ghost*". That is, they were men who fulfilled the command of **Ephesians 5:18**. The word "*full*" means, "*thoroughly permeated with; full, complete; lacking nothing, perfect.*" It carries the idea of being "*controlled*" by the Holy Spirit! For a Deacon, this is absolutely indispensable!

If you are going to be a blessing to this church and not a burden, then you must walk in the Spirit so that the fruit of the Spirit can flow through your life, **Galatians 5:22-23**. My Brother, if you will walk in the Spirit, you will be a blessing to this church, but if you begin to walk in the flesh, you will hinder everything God wants to do here! Therefore, you should determine to be a Spirit-filled man, or you should stay away from this office!

## II. **A BIBLICAL DEACON MUST BE A SERVANT**

(**Note:** In the beginning, Deacons were chosen to be servants to the church. In fact, the word Deacon comes from a word that means "*to wait tables*". It carries the idea of serving with such dedication that the servant "*kicks up dust as he serves*". Maybe that is why the Bible says that Deacons are to "*use*" the office, not merely "*fill*" it.)

A. **He Is To Serve The Father** - **1 Timothy 3:8-13** - When we take the time to look at the list of qualifications in **1 Timothy 3**, it becomes easy to see that Deacons are expected to live godly, separated lives. You are to be an obedient, surrendered servant to God the Father. Let's look at this list of requirements.

1. V. 8 ***Grave*** - Men who are serious about their duty. Men who are worthy of respect. Men who live lives worth imitating.

2. V. 8 ***Not Doubletongued*** - 3-fold

A. Not a gossip

B. Does not say one thing to one person and something else to another.

C. A man whose word is dependable.

3. V. 8 ***Not Greedy Of Filthy Lucre*** - Men who have a spiritual attitude toward money and who will not use their office for financial gain. (Ill. Don't be a tightwad!)

4. V. 9 ***Holding The Mystery Of The Faith In A Pure Conscience*** - Men of the word who are well grounded in the fundamental doctrines of the faith. Men who are more concerned with what the Bible says than they are with what the church covenant, church constitution and by-laws, or the denominational leaders say.

5. V. 10 ***Let Them Be Proved*** - Examined as to their qualifications and seen to be fulfilling them.

6. V. 10 Let them "*Use*" The Office - Too many men merely fill the office. God says use it! The office of a Deacon is something that is to be used, actively for the glory of God.

7. V. 11 *Wives* - Must be qualified too! Can cause great harm in the church if a Deacon's wife is evil spirited or long-tongued.

8. V. 12 *In Control Of Home* - Not a dictator! But one who has earned the love and respect of his family. The Deacon must be a family man! One who loves, nurtures and cares for his family. You can look at how a man's family treat him and respond to him and tell a lot about his spiritual condition.

**B. He Is To Serve The Faithful - Acts 6:1-4** - The Deacon is to be a servant of both *preacher* and *people*.

1. The Pastor needs the Deacons of the church to aid him in ministry to the church. One man cannot do it all, and he should not be expected to! The Deacons are to be active in the work of ministry. They should visit the sick, care for the bereaved, head off problems that may arise, take care of business, under the supervision of the Pastor, and generally be a servant to the man of God! Deacons are not the Pastor's private slaves, but they are to be partners in ministry! But, the primary leadership role has been vested in the office of Pastor, **Heb; 13:4, 17!** Deacons were not created to "*run*" the church! They were created to serve the Pastor and the people! Take the time to be a friend to the man of God! Free him up so that he can devote himself to the ministries of prayer and preaching.

2. The people in the pews need the Deacons as well. Take the time to serve the church. Be there for them when they need help. Look after the welfare and do everything in your power to maintain the peace and harmony of the church. Avoid being caught up in cliques, but be a servant of all the people all the time. When the Bible says, "*over this business*", **Acts 6:3**, it refers to the business of ministering to people! I know we have expanded the ministry of the Deacons in the modern church to include the financial business as well, I am not against that, but the Deacon must remember, that first and foremost, his office is that of a servant and ministry must come first!

**C. He Is To Serve The Fallen - Acts 6:7** - The Deacon also has a duty to the backslider and the lost man too. In short, Deacons need to be bold witnesses. It is interesting that when the early church appointed the first Deacons, the church experienced great blessing and growth. Contrast **Acts 2:47** and **Acts 6:7**. Let the Deacons be men who are vocal and open about the faith and who work hard to reclaim the backslider and win the lost.

### **III. A BIBLICAL DEACON MUST BE A SOLDIER**

**A. He Is To Fight For The Scriptures - 1 Timothy 3:9** - We have already touched on this, but Deacons must be active in the ministry of the Word of God! They, along with the Pastor, are to guard the doctrinal purity of the church, so that we have a faith to hand down to the next generation, **2 Timothy 2:2**.

**B. He Is To Fight For The Saints - Acts 6:7** - The Deacon has a responsibility to do everything in his power to help the church grow and to become all that God wants it to be. Thank God for Deacons who are like bulldogs! They sniff out problems that would harm the Pastor and the church and they take a stand against those things and the people behind them!

**C. He Is To Fight For The Sinners - Acts 6:8; Acts 6:9-7:60; Acts 8:5-40** - Notice that these first Deacons became very active in the spread of the Gospel. In fact, Stephen, the preaching Deacon, became the first martyr of the Christian era. He preached with a boldness that caused his enemies to attack him. Philip carried on the tradition and was instrumental in a great revival that came in Samaria. Yet, he was not too busy to take the time to minister to individuals as well.

These early Deacons set a standard that must be upheld in this day as well. The Deacons must be men with a passion for souls. A lack of concern for the lost translates into deadness for the church. Therefore, be a bold witness sharing the greatest story ever told!

**Conc:** The work is great. The standard is high. The need is very present! The rewards are amazing. Dear Brother and other Deacons in this building, you are needed as much today as you were 2,000 years ago! The church needs good Deacons who are serious about carrying out their office and being a servant of the church. What the church does not need are men who think they are God's gift to the church and who set themselves up as little dictators. Those men who receive ordination as a Deacon and discharge their duties in a proper way are promised that they will be blessed in their spiritual walk, **1 Tim. 3:13**. The term "*good degree*" refers to "*respect*" Deacons who serve well are held in high esteem by the people of the church. They are also promised "*great boldness*". This means that they can speak the truth in boldness, because they are living the life they should and they are being a blessing to the people of God.

Brother, I look forward to hearing the good report of how the Lord is using you here at this church for His great glory. Be a good Deacon! Be a friend to your Pastor! Be servant of the people! If you do these things, the Lord will surely bless your work for Him.

## THE PLACE OF REFUGE

Preached:

Text: Numbers 35, also Joshua 20

Introduction: During the days of Moses and Joshua, the method of carrying out vengeance was different than today. Today we depend entirely on our Judiciary system to satisfy our need for justice when someone does us wrong.

By the way; the word "vengeance" is not an ugly word, as some would portray it to be. I mention that because today that word so often carries with in an evil connotation, which should not always be the case. In fact, in Romans 12:19, God says, "...vengeance is mine: I will repay, saith the Lord," so we know it is not evil. God said, "...vengeance is mine..." and we know that God is a holy God.

A simple definition of vengeance is: "The punishment in retaliation for an injury or offense."

Now, we do have to be careful about becoming vindictive. There are some people who have no chance of ever having any happiness in this life because they are so vindictive. Often they are like snakes; curled up, ready to strike back if anyone steps on them. While we understand it is wrong to be vindictive, we also know during the days when Moses and Joshua were alive they did not depend entirely on a judiciary system to right all wrongs. For those who accidentally wronged, or hurt someone, there was no "court."

**Illus:** Suppose we could travel back in time to that day. Suppose I was out in the woods with one of your "kinsmen." Also suppose it was a known fact that he and I were not the best of friends. Then suppose, as we are cutting wood, the ax head slipped off the handle of my ax and struck your kinsman and killed him. You could not know if I had killed him on purpose, or if it had been an accident.

If I had killed him on purpose then it would be your responsibility to find me and kill me for what I had done.

Look at Numbers 35:19. We read, "The avenger of blood himself shall put the murderer to death; when he meets him, he shall put him to death."

Because some of these deaths were not of malice, nor planned in any way, God appointed certain cities to be "cities of refuge." Any person who accidentally killed anyone could flee to one of these cities and as long as he met certain conditions he would be safe from any avenger.

Look at Numbers 35:11. We read, "then you shall appoint cities to be cities of refuge for you, that the manslayer who kills any person accidentally may flee there."

God appointed three of these cities on the other side of Jordan and three in the land of Canaan. They were to be clearly marked and easy to find for those who had to flee to them.

At intersections, large signs were erected which simply said, "Refuge" that pointed toward the city.

Bridges were built over ravines so one could get there, and the cities were always stocked with food and water.

The person who fled to a city of refuge would be looking for a place to rest, to work things out, to be safe, and to be accepted and loved.

People who fled to these cities also were seeking a place where people would listen and not think their stories were stupid, because they had been through the same things.

A man could flee to one of these six cities and remain safe until he stood before the congregation of judgment. Look at Numbers 35:15. We read, "You shall appoint three cities on this side of the Jordan, and three cities you shall appoint in the land of Canaan, which will be cities of refuge. These six cities shall be for refuge for the children of Israel, for the stranger, and for the sojourner among them, that anyone who kills a person accidentally may flee there."

The six cities of refuge were types of the Lord Jesus Christ. Again, the person who killed someone by accident could flee to one of these six cities and be safe from anyone who would avenge the death of the one he killed. You may not know this, but I think perhaps you do; that Mr. Death is hot on the trail of you today who do not know Christ. The only hope you have of surviving is to come to Christ before Death gets you. He stalks the trail of every lost person. He is trying, even now, to get his hands on everyone before he can come to Christ for salvation.

The Lord Jesus is our ultimate "refuge" and he offers us shelter and protection. The Lord's church is a place where people, who had once been in sin, gather. All had faced a common dilemma.

These six cities that Moses and Joshua had appointed as cities of refuge reveal something about our place of refuge in Christ. For example, look at-

### I. THE ADVANCEMENT

Look at Josh 20:3, "that the slayer who kills a person accidentally or unintentionally may flee there; and they shall be your refuge from the avenger of blood."

What is God's Word saying? Again, It is saying that if a man kills another man accidentally, he can flee to one of the six cities and the avenger, who seeks to destroy

him, cannot if he enters that city.

Notice, if that man is going to be saved, he must move. There must be an **ADVANCEMENT** on his part. The person who has killed another accidentally **MUST ADVANCE**. He must move from where he is to the city of refuge.

Notice, verse 3 says that the **SLAYER** may **FLEE THERE**. This tells me that God was saying that the slayer had to make a choice. He **MAY FLEE** because when the dead man's brother comes and see this man has killed his brother, it is his responsibility to shed the killer's blood. God said the killer may **FLEE** as fast as he can to the nearest city of refuge. This is a picture of the case of every sinner. Lost person, it is your responsibility to flee to the Lord Jesus before Mr. Death gets you! God's Word says, "...knock, and it shall be opened unto you." It is your responsibility to **FLEE** to the Savior and "knock" on heaven's gate, and ask Him to save you, that is, seek the Savior as your place of refuge. Jesus said, "Come unto me and I will give you rest." The Bible teaches that it is the responsibility of every lost man and woman to **FLEE** unto the Lord Jesus.

**Illus:** Jesus did not tell you to stand around and say, "I am sorry for what I have done. Let me go down to the florist and order some flowers."

**Illus:** He did not tell you to say, "I am sorry for what I have done, but I have company coming. As soon as they leave I will leave to go to the city of refuge."

**Illus:** He did not tell you to say, "I am so sorry for what I have done, but I am so tired. I think I will lay down and take a nap and when I wake up I will flee to Hebron."

No, He did not tell you that because He knew that while you would be doing those things the avenger might catch you and might take a "knife" and "plunge it into your heart."

God told the man of Old Testament days that if he accidentally offended anyone he was to **FLEE** because his avenger would be hot on his trail and the only hope he had was to get to that city of refuge before the avenger got to him!

Mr. Lost Man, let me tell you -- you can waste time if you want to, but there is coming a time when Mr. Death is going to sneak up on you and you will have no idea he is around the corner and is going to get you before you have a chance to get to Christ!

Many have left church saying, "I plan to get saved soon," but they put it off and kept putting it off. Finally they went to sleep one night and woke up in hell.

Many have said, "I am going to accept the Lord one day soon," but they sit back in their easy chair and before they could take a deep breath they had a heart attack and landed in hell.

Mr. Lost man, the Bible teaches it is your responsibility, and the responsibility of all

others like you, to flee as fast as you can to the Savior. You can never know...

- The next breath you take may be your last.

- The next heartbeat may be the last.

Mr. Death is hot on your trail. If he gets you before you come to Christ, Satan has you for eternity!

Long ago it was the responsibility of the man who accidentally killed anyone to FLEE before the AVENGER could get to him.

You must make an ADVANCEMENT TOWARD THAT CITY OF REFUGE! Jesus said to those who rejected Him that they would not come to Him that they might have life. But notice something else the killer had to do. We have seen THE ADVANCEMENT. Also look at ...

## II. THE ADMISSION

Look at Joshua 20:4, "And when he flees to one of those cities, and stands at the entrance of the gate of the city, and declares his case in the hearing of the elders of that city, they shall take him into the city as one of them, and give him a place, that he may dwell among them."

When the guilty man got to the gate he had to ADMIT that he had killed a man. He had to say, "I ADMIT I have killed a man. I did not mean to do it, but I did it! The avenger of blood is on my trail; you have to let me in. I need help!"

Notice, the guilty man not only had to FLEE TO THE CITY, but once he got there, he had to ADMIT what he had done.

The Bible says that when he arrived he had to, "...declare his case in the ears of the elders of that city..." That is, HE HAD TO CONFESS THAT HE HAD KILLED A MAN! God considers confession and cleansing to be imperative.

**Illus:** Did you know - In 1842 the first bathtub was denounced as a "luxurious and democratic vanity." Boston declared it unlawful to bathe, except on doctor's prescription. In 1843 Philadelphia made bathing illegal between November 1, and March 15.

There was a day when people, because of ignorance, thought that taking a bath would cause death. But listen, getting cleaned up PHYSICALLY and SPIRITUALLY has never hurt anyone!

How tragic it is that many Christians have adopted a similar schedule of spiritual cleansing. We would rather put up with the stench of our unconfessed sins than come clean before God! Confession, or admitting sin, is something God's Word teaches, but

some of the confessing we have today is not what God had in mind. For example:

There is an old saying about people having "skeletons in their closets," but we wonder, if all the skeletons of sin people in churches are hiding were suddenly revealed, it would be shocking. HOW WELL WE HIDE OUR SINS!

It is hard to admit a sin -- isn't it husbands? Isn't it wives? Isn't it children?

Illus: Once, when Frederick II, an eighteenth century King of Prussia, went on an inspection tour of a Berlin prison, he was greeted with the cries of prisoners who fell on their knees and protested their unjust imprisonment. While listening to these pleas of innocence, Frederick's eyes caught a solitary figure in the corner, a prisoner seemingly unconcerned with all the commotion.

"Why are you here?" Frederick asked him.

"Armed robbery, Your Majesty," came the reply.

"Were you guilty?" the king asked.

"Oh yes indeed, Your Majesty. I entirely deserve my punishment." At that Frederick summoned the jailer. "Release this guilty man at once," he said. "I will not have him kept in this prison where he will corrupt all the fine innocent people who occupy it."

The Bible said it was the responsibility of the guilty man to ADVANCE TO THE CITY OF REFUGE and once there, he was to ADMIT his guilt. There was the ADVANCEMENT, ADMISSION, but also ...

### III. THE ABIDING

The Bible says, once the guilty man reached the city of refuge, verse 4, "...they shall take him into the city unto them, and give him a place, that he may dwell among them." This is what happens when a sinner comes to Jesus. As a guilty sinner the Lord makes a place that he may abide in Him. You will not find one account in this Bible of anyone fleeing to one of the six cities of refuge and being denied entrance. And you will find no record of Jesus turning a repentant sinner away. Jesus said, John 6:37, "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out."

Look at the word "dwell" in our text. When we come to Christ the Bible tells us we ABIDE IN HIM. That is, we find a place to live, to dwell. We do not "dwell" in Christ on Sunday and then slip over the walls and live in sin during the week. In Christ we find a place to DWELL!

We have many today who have the mistaken idea that you can dwell in Christ on Sunday and then "dwell" in sin during the week. They are mistaken. Those who do this are NOT

ABIDING IN JESUS. They do not know a thing about ABIDING IN CHRIST!

**Illus:** The Christian life is an every-day dwelling in Christ. If you are not willing to "dwell" in Him seven days a week, three hundred and sixty-five days a year, you do not need to come to Him because He is not going to let you in!

The cities of refuge of old were not temporary refuges. They were permanent. When you come to Christ, you should understand you are coming to a permanent dwelling place. We have seen the ADVANCEMENT, the ADMISSION, the ABIDING, but also look at...

#### IV. THE APPOINTMENT

Look at verse 6. We read, "And he shall dwell in that city until he stands before the congregation for judgment, and until the death of the one who is high priest in those days. Then the slayer may return and come to his own city and his own house, to the city from which he fled."

How long was the guilty man to stay in the city of refuge? The Bible says, Joshua 20:6, "And he shall dwell in that city ... until the death of the high priest..." In other words, he would probably be there a long time--" ...until the death of the high priest..."

How long are we to be "in Christ"? In the book of Hebrews we are told that Christ is our "high priest."

There were two kinds of priesthood during that time. One was the priesthood of...

(1) Aaron. Those priests were replaced often, as there were frequent deaths.

(2) Melchisedec. This is the order from which Christ, our high priest, has come. Did you know that we have no record of Melchisedec, from where he came, when he came, nor when he left? He is the perfect picture of our high priest, the Lord Jesus. He had no beginning and has no ending!

Notice, the man was to stay in the city until the death of the high priest! In Numbers 35:27 we read, "And the revenger of blood find him without the borders of the city of his refuge, the revenger of blood kill the slayer; he shall not be guilty of blood." Now let us consider...

#### V. THE AVENGER

Look at verse 5. We read, "Then if the avenger of blood pursues him, they shall not deliver the slayer into his hand, because he struck his neighbor unintentionally, but did not hate him beforehand."

**Illus:** The Bible says once the guilty person got inside the gate, when the avenger came

saying, "Let me have him. I am going to choke him to death. Let me have him. I am going to turn him every way but loose," he was turned away. The Bible says they were to tell the avenger, "No, you can not have him. If you had gotten him before he came into the gate he would have been yours, but since he is in the gate you may not lay a hand on him!"

Jesus said in John 10:28, "And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand."

The avenger is barred from the city. He cannot lay a hand on us. Romans 8:1, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

What does it mean to be "IN CHRIST"? It means the same as it meant to be on the ark when the flood covered the earth. Only those in the ark were saved. It means the same as it meant to be in Rahab's house -- if you were anywhere else you would perish. You had better get in before the avenger gets you!

**Illus:** David said that there was but a step between himself and death.

**Illus:** Imagine a man who had accidentally killed a man and he was fleeing as fast as he could! Right behind him was the avenger, gaining ground all the time. The guilty man reached that city of refuge by only one step, but did you know that the avenger still could not lay a hand on him!

This was the way the thief who died on a cross when Jesus was dying got into heaven. He barely made it, but thank the Lord he was able to make it!

Listen lost person; you had better not put this thing off. Satan, the avenger, is hot on your trail. He is right behind you. If he gets his hands on you before you get to Christ, you will perish for eternity!

Conclusion: We are to STAY IN CHRIST, our high priest.

**Nehemiah 1:1-11**

**WANTED: PEOPLE OF VISION**

**Intro:** The people of Judah and the city of Jerusalem were in a terrible condition. Over 150 years earlier, Nebuchadnezzar and the armies of Babylon had invaded Israel and had carried many of the people away as slaves. The Jews desperately needed someone who had the vision needed to restore Jerusalem and Israel to her former glory. They needed someone who was different. They needed someone who had been captured by God and was set on fire by His Spirit. They needed a person of vision if they were going to see their situation changed. God had such a man! His name was Nehemiah and he was being prepared by God as a vessel to be used in a great way to rebuild the city of Jerusalem and to bring about the restoration of the nation of Israel.

You and I may be thousands of years removed from the time of Nehemiah, but we also live in a nation that desperately needs people of vision. We live in a day when the walls of morality and virtue in society have been torn down and the gates of decency are aflame. It is clear to all that the church in our day is a mere shell of its former self. The walls of separation between the church and the world have been torn down. The gates of glory that identified the church as the house of God have been burned by the flames of sin and tarnished by the blight of apathy.

We need people of vision! We can become people of vision! We can become the people God uses for His glory in these days to make a difference for His name's sake! As we look into these verses tonight, there are three simple facts presented here that teach us how to become people of vision. Let's look at those facts as I preach on the thought, *Wanted: People Of Vision.*

I. V. 1-4 **PEOPLE OF VISION ENCOUNTER PROBLEMS**

- A. V. 1 **The Calmness Of Nehemiah's Life** - The life Nehemiah lived as the king's cupbearer was a life of peace, prosperity and political power. His job was to taste all the king's food before it got to the king to prevent the king from being poisoned. He would have been one of the most trusted men in the kingdom. The king would have looked to Nehemiah for advice from time to time. His was a life of great serenity and ease. Nehemiah was living the good life!
  
- B. V. 2-3 **The Calamity Of Nehemiah's Life** - His peace and serenity was shattered by a visit from his brother. He brought news that the people of Israel were being afflicted by their enemies and that the city of Jerusalem was completely devastated. (Ill. I find it amazing how life can be perfect one minute and can fall all to pieces the next.)

- C. V. 4 **The Compassion Of Nehemiah's Life** - When Nehemiah hears this awful news, his heart breaks and he enters a time of fasting, weeping and prayer before the Lord. Instead of being happy in his position, his life is shattered and he brought to his knees!

**(Note:** This is how God forms people of vision! He knows how to stir up our nests when we become complacent and He knows how to get our hearts and minds on the things that truly matter. For Nehemiah, the innocent question he asked in **verse 2** was to be a pivotal moment in his life. The very fact that he cared about the people of Israel enough to even ask the question is evidence that God was already working in his heart. But, when he hears the response, it brings him to his knees before God. You see, God wanted to restore Jerusalem, but He needed a man of vision to bring that to pass. The news from Jerusalem was God's call for Nehemiah to become involved in what God wanted to do.

When God stirs up your nest, that is His call for you to become involved with Him in what He is about to do. Now, when that call comes, people respond in different ways. Some, like Isaiah, respond eagerly to God's invitation, **Isaiah 6:8**. Others, like Jonah, try to run from the call of God in their lives, **Jonah 1:1-3**. Still others, like Moses see the vision, but try to take matters into their own hands and do the job their way and in their time, **Exodus 2:11-14**. But, when that fails and they are brought to the place where they have to wait on God, the job gets done the right way, **Exodus 3-15**.

Just remember, God knows how to get your attention. When He stirs up your nest and places a burden on your heart, do not hesitate, but go with Him into whatever He calls you to do. He has a great plan, and nothing is greater than being allowed to be a part of that plan!)

## II. V. 4-11a **PEOPLE OF VISION EXERCISE PRAYER**

(III. As Nehemiah goes before the Lord in prayer, he sets the example for other people who would be people of vision. He teaches us how to come before the Lord in prayer.)

- A. V. 5 **Visionary Praying Involves Praise** - Nehemiah begins his prayer by exalting the Lord. *He praises God for His Superiority, His Strength, His Sovereignty, His Sacredness and His Sincerity. He praises God for Who He is!* That is a lesson we all need to learn! After all, this is how Jesus taught His disciple to pray, **Matthew 6:9**. (III. **Psalm 100:4**)
- B. V. 6a **Visionary Praying Involves Perseverance** - Nehemiah prayed "*day and night*". He got before the Lord and prayed until the answer came. That is the kind

- of praying we need to see demonstrated in our day. Not the kind of prayer that will stop after a time or two. But, the kind of prayer that goes to God and stays before God until it has what it came after. This is what Jesus has called us to do, **Luke 18:1**. After all, prayer that is born out of a genuine burden cannot be satisfied until it is answered! If we can pray for something once or twice and then forget all about it, we should ask ourselves whether or not we were truly praying from a burdened heart!
- C. V. 6b-7 **Visionary Praying Involves Penitence** - As this man prays, he begins to confess his sins as an individual and the sins of His people as a nation. He even confesses the sins of his fathers. What we see here is a man with a repentant heart. My friends, this is essential in seeing our prayers answered, **Psalm 66:18**. (**Note**: It is important to understand here that Nehemiah was not just interested in talking about where others had gone wrong, he was also willing to see where he, himself, had missed the boat with God. Repentance is about me getting my heart right with God!)
- D. V. 8-10 **Visionary Praying Involves Promises** - Now, Nehemiah begins to remind God of the promises He had made to Israel. Promises to punish their sins and to restore them in the event of repentance. (**Note**: When prayer is based squarely in the Word of God and founded upon the promises of God, the one praying can be sure that he will have the things he prays for. Why? Because God has staked His reputation on the accuracy of His Word, **Psalm 138:2**. He has promised us that His promises will always be fulfilled, **Rom. 4:21**.)
- E. V. 11 **Visionary Praying Involves Partners** - As Nehemiah prays he reminds God that he isn't the only one involved in this prayer effort. He might have been the one destined to be the star of this show, but he knew that he was part of a team effort in prayer. (**Note**: Let me encourage you to get as many people as possible involved in praying for you and praying with you. The Lord told us there was power in corporate prayer - **Matthew 18:19**.)
- F. V. 11 **Visionary Praying Involves Petitions** - Nehemiah finally gets around to what is on his heart. At this moment, he is merely praying for the Lord to give him grace in the sight of the king. He knows that to prevail with man, man must prevail before the Lord! (**Note**: Certainly part of prayer ought to be the expression of our needs before the Lord, **Philippians 4:6**. The Lord is interested in His people coming to Him by faith to ask for the things they have need of. He may already know what we need, but He still wants us to ask! The faith involved in our praying honors Him greatly!)

III. V. 11b **PEOPLE OF VISION EMBRACE PROVIDENCE**

(Ill. The final statement of Nehemiah in **verse 11** seems to indicate that he felt the weight of the assignment. He knew that who he was and where he was at that moment was no accident!)

- A. **Position Is No Accident** - Regardless of your position in life, whether at church, at work, at school, at home, etc., you need to know that it is no accident! God has placed you where He has for a purpose. He has placed you where you are for His purpose! There are no accidents or coincidences with God! You are where you are for His glory! (Ill. Esther - **Esther 4:14**)
  
- B. **Prosperity Is No Accident** - The resources you have been given are not yours by luck! They have been given to you by the providence of God to be used for His glory. Find out what He would have you do with what you have! (Ill. The wise men and Joseph - **Matthew 2:11-15**)
  
- C. **Power Is No Accident** - The influence you have been given in the lives of others is no accident! God has given you the ear of others for a purpose. Allow Him to use you where you are for His glory! (Ill. Nehemiah and the king; Ill. Servant girl and Naaman - **2 Kings 5:3**)

**(Note:** *“I thank God for the Unseen Hand, sometimes urging me onward, sometimes holding me back; sometimes with a caress of approval, sometimes with a stroke of reproof; sometimes correcting, sometimes comforting. My times are in His hand.”*—Vance Havner)

**Conc:** Would you agree with me that we desperately need people of vision in our day? I think we all see the need for people who in touch with God, for people who are moved by God and people on the move for God. We need that kind of people in our churches, our families and our communities. Those are the people who will be used to change our world in these last days.

Now, the question we face tonight is this: Do you want to be one of those people? If you do then you need to realize that God has you living in these days for a purpose. Then, you need to get before Him to find that purpose and to catch His vision for seeing that purpose fulfilled. God will use you if you will give Him you to use!