

UNKNOWN, BUT NOT FORGOTTEN!

Nehemiah 11-12:26

Swindoll: Reminded me of an impressive sight:

Crosses at the **military graveyard** outside of San Francisco.
We don't know names of those buried there.

Even if we did, we could never pick them out off in the distance.

Row after row, they all look alike.

People, unknown to us today,

who gave their lives that we might enjoy our freedom.

In the **spiritual battlefield** as well, godly men and women have quietly done what God called them to do.

They lie in silence, unknown and unremembered,

as history flows rapidly by.

Yet, without their faithful service and obedience to God,

we wouldn't be here today.

Many have willingly served unknown,

to give us the heritage we build on.

Bible knowledge quiz: Name that Person:

Can you name the expert craftsman who supervised the construction of **the tabernacle**. Ex. 35 (Bezalel)

The person(s) in charge of the construction of **the Temple**.

Only a few key people are named (We don't know them!):

Adoniram, head over conscripted workers;

Hiram, King of Tyre, supervises wood cutting;

Hiram from Tyre, expert worker in bronze,

supervises most the work.

Who else works on it?

Leader(s) of first temple choir(s). (Asaph, Jeduthun, Heman)

Can you name **ANY** of **those who moved to Jerusalem**

in the days of Nehemiah?

In over **160 years** of **our church's history**,

many godly men and women have labored here.

None could name 10 people involved here 50 years ago.

(Few could name 20 from more than 20 years ago!).

They're gone and forgotten—by us.

But not by God who placed them here.

We're able to worship because these have gone before us.

Does *anybody* know the name of the person in whose house the antecessors of PVBC first met in 1842? (Elisha Dunnuck)

How about the first minister to visit here? (Rev. O.V. Lemon).

Does any of us know *anything* about those people?

Does anyone know the name of the first Grace Seminary student to begin ministry here, who became pastor of PV Community Church in 1941? (Herman Baerg)

Fifty years from now, no one will know we've been here either
—at least by name.

But **God will know!**

Will our presence here make a difference?

Our passage this morning isn't likely to become your favorite devotional passage!

Our dialogue this week:

Mike —hard to pick hymns to go with this passage.

Ralph —hard to develop an expositional message.

A quick perusal of these chapters demonstrates that

we're looking at another list of long, hard-to-pronounce names

Most are totally unknown to us.

These names represent many others who aren't mentioned,
but who're part of the process.

None of these names are on the tips of our tongues!

The focus of this part of Nehemiah is a missionary story in reverse.

They're moving back from a "foreign field;"
back to their homeland.

God's still seeking people,

willing to go wherever He wants us to go;

to be whatever He wants us to be;

who do not care who gets the glory!

[Nehemiah 11 describes the . . .]

SETTLEMENT OF THE CITIES 11

Inhabitants of Jerusalem 11:1-19

Because of conditions in Jerusalem,

most people are living *outside* the city, in surrounding towns.

Neh. 7:4 *"Now the city was large and spacious, but there were few people in it, and the houses had not yet been rebuilt."*

**It's difficult to motivate people
to move into Jerusalem.**

THREE PROBLEMS:

1. **Ruins and rubble** surrounding the city.

If outside walls had to be rebuilt,

what do you suppose the *inner city* looked like?

Have you seen a house abandoned for years?

How about house down here on Fox Farm road?

Have you looked at it closely (the grass and weeds,
animals (rats!), spiders, dust, trash and rubble)?

Try to imagine a whole city, abandoned for 140 years!

[Fencing off of Managua after Nicaragua earthquake.]

This is worse than a ghetto!

Reconstruction would not be pleasant.

It's easier to live in other towns, or rebuild in the open field,
than to clean up and start over.

2. **No jobs** in the city.

3. **Enemies surrounding them**

The city's a sitting target for anyone wishing to attack.

Basis of selection—of those who should move into the city—

11:1-4a *"Now the leaders of the people settled in Jerusalem, and the rest of the people cast lots to bring one out of every ten to live in Jerusalem, the holy city, while the remaining nine were to stay in their own towns. 2 The people commended all the men who volunteered to live in Jerusalem. 3 These are the provincial leaders who settled in Jerusalem (now some Israelites, priests, Levites, temple servants and descendants of Solomon's servants*

lived in the towns of Judah, each on his own property in the various towns, 4 while other people from both Judah and Benjamin lived in Jerusalem):..."

To begin restoration of the city, **the rulers** lead the way.
A plan is developed to cast lots, so **1/10th** live in Jerusalem.
They're called to occupy city identified as **the HOLY CITY**.

–first time it's called that in Scripture.

Those who live there will be identified as God's people
–set apart to occupy HIS city and glorify Him there.

It appears most people hope they will **NOT** be chosen.

Life didn't look very bright for those called.

Undoubtedly some complained about their lot.

"Why did God let this happen to me?!"

They'd rather live in the suburbs,
or out in the country!

Even so, some VOLUNTEER for duty!

They *want* to be part of the Holy City.

They *want* to be used by God to rebuild His city.

Those who volunteer are commended for their brave act.

The others thank God for them.

They use a kind of draft by lottery.

Casting lots is the way God's people in that day
allow God to speak to them.

As each family determines that

God is designating them to populate the city,

they're willing to go where God wants them to go.

**God places people where HE wants to use them
for HIS glory.**

Those so designated go voluntarily.

No one forces them to go.

Blessing by the people is directed

toward those who respond positively to God's call.

They're blessed because they **willingly** give themselves to do what God wants.

It's more than just obedience.

It's a positive response from the heart.

Similarly, many areas **today** have **no witness for Christ**.

There's a need for evangelical witness in such places, large areas of inner city, remote rural villages and tribes.

How do we determine who God wants to live among these people so there's testimony among them for His glory?

We'd rather stay where it's comfortable, than take a risk and move into a "dangerous" area in order to glorify God there.

Ronald Sider: "If one per cent of evangelicals living outside the inner city had the faith and courage to move in to town, evangelicals would fundamentally alter the history of urban America."

Boice urges the church to move back into urban centers; to place a block captain on every block and go after our neighbors for Christ.

That's probably **not** a legitimate application of this passage.

However, there is a legitimate point to that vision!

Have we, like these, asked where God wants US to live?

Have we settled with purpose of being His representatives, serving Him wherever He puts us?

Results of selection 11:4b-19

People obey God's plan to occupy the city.

A list is given of those who live in Jerusalem.

They come primarily from tribes of Judah and Benjamin (appropriate due to previous connection with Jerusalem).

They were taken to Babylon.

Most of those who returned come from those tribes.

Israel (N) was taken captive 280 yr before (to Assyria).

The lists are organized by physical descendancy and by political leadership, these aren't just random names.

They're government and religious leaders.

Ancestry is confirmed to demonstrate they have appropriate credentials for posts they receive,

Few long-forgotten heroes are mentioned by name.

Even those mentioned are mostly unknown to us.

When people obey God's plan to do what He wants them to do, God is glorified

—even though we don't know their names.

Inhabitants of Other Cities 11:20-36

Other leaders and the remaining towns occupied are also listed.

IDENTIFICATION OF PRIESTS AND LEVITES 12:1-26

To guaranty purity of priestly line,

they identify families of the restoration.

List is given to enable them to identify legitimate future priests on the basis of their genealogies.

SEVEN GROUPS OF HONORED UNKNOWN HEROES IN THIS ACCOUNT:

1. Those who voluntarily occupy Jerusalem. 11:1-4

2. Those who work inside the temple 11:10-12

3. Those who work outside the temple 11:15-16

4. Worship leaders 11:17; 12:8-9; 12:23-24

Led in thanksgiving and prayer

5. Gatekeepers 11:19; 12:25-26

Guarded gates and storerooms at the gates

6. Temple servants 11:21

7. Singers and song leaders 11:22-23

Different people, wired differently, according to family heritage, God-given gifts, and abilities.

God places each one, according to HIS plan and purposes.

APPLICATION TO OUR LIFE TODAY

What groups of unknown servants could WE include who faithfully minister in our church?

Ushers, worship teams, accompanists, sound crew, secretaries, maintenance workers and helpers, coffeemakers, Missions Committee, Boards, Hispanic ministry helpers and drivers, Caris and those who serve others, Alabaster Fellowship leaders, car care workers, quilters, flock leaders, Bible Fellowship teachers, children's teachers, nursery workers, children's church workers, greeters, library helpers, openers and closers, snow shovelers, lawn mowers, fertilizers, line stripers.

Have you asked God where He wants YOU to live and serve Him?

For some, going where God wants you to go may mean **going to a far away land**.

For others, going where God wants you to go may mean just going to the city, or **STAYING HERE** in Warsaw!

Have we settled here, to represent Him; serving Him wherever He has placed us?

Are we willing to go *wherever* God wants us?

To be *whatever* God wants us to be?

Ministry to be done in this church may not produce headline name recognition—but it's important.

Though people may never remember our name, God's work will be immensely different if we don't do our part!

God knows the names of those who volunteer to serve Him out of love for Him and for His work.

God judges faithfulness, not applause.

*There's **no applause meter** to judge Christian ministry.*

**God wants US to be willing to serve Him
wherever He sends us,
with no regard for who gets the credit,
as long as He gets the glory!**

I'll Go Where You Want Me to Go

It may *not* be on the mountain height or over the stormy sea,
 It may *not* be at the battlefront my Lord will have need of me;
 But if by a still small voice He calls to paths I do not know,
 I'll answer, dear Lord, with my hand in Thine,
 I'll GO where *You* want me to go.

Perhaps today there are loving words
 which Jesus would have me speak,
 There may be now, in the paths of sin,
 some wanderer whom I should seek;
 O Savior, if Thou wilt be my guide,
 Tho dark and rugged the way,
 My voice will echo the message sweet,
 I'll SAY what *You* want me to say.

There's surely *somewhere* a lowly place
 in earth's harvest fields so wide,
 Where I may labor through life's short day for Jesus the crucified;
 So, trusting my all unto Thy care—I know Thou lovest me—
 I'll do Thy will with a heart sincere,
 I'll BE what *You* want me to be.

I'll go where *You* want me to go, dear Lord,
 O'er mountain or plain or sea;
 I'll say what *You* want me to say, dear Lord,
 I'll be what *You* want me to be.