

Removing Oppression for the Glory of God

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 07 June 2020

Preacher: Pastor Andrew

[0 : 00] Lord, we stand or sit right now and we bless you.

! We praise you for you are worthy.! The Lamb that was slain for us. The Lamb who shed His blood.

The spotless Lamb of God who purchased redemption for us. Who made a way into the very throne room, into the very presence of God.

Through your mercy and compassion, by overcoming the oppression of sin, by liberating us from the bondage and slavery of our own wickedness, and leading us into freedom.

Making a way for us to have fellowship with God. You've broken down the wall that has separated us from you and from your people, by making a way through Jesus, by faith in you, because of the work of your Son, Jesus Christ, on the cross.

[1 : 30] Lord, it is my prayer this morning that through our time in Nehemiah chapter 5, and through looking into the scriptures, that you would help to call us into a greater appreciation of your worthiness.

God, in God, in expression and understanding, in reverence of your worthiness, make us faithful and worthy vessels.

Help us to know your heart today. May we echo the heart of Christ. The heart of Christ to remove oppression.

First of sin, and then of every other oppression that we see in front of us. As an evidence of the portrait of Jesus in the work of your ministry here on this earth.

So help us, Lord, to emulate your heart and your ultimate purpose for all nations to be redeemed and ransomed and purchased back to you.

[2 : 40] Lead us in our study this morning in your word. Allow your Holy Spirit to have your way in us, we pray. In Jesus' name, amen.

Amen. Well, it is very special to have all of you here, instead of just preaching to a camera. It's nice to actually have some smiling faces.

It's good to be with you this morning. That song expresses the pathway, the end point, really, of where we're going to go.

We're starting in Nehemiah chapter 5. But the culmination of what we see in Nehemiah chapter 5 is to help us see a foreshadowing.

A foreshadowing of the ministry of Jesus and the work that Jesus intends to accomplish. The work of redemption. The work of ransom.

[3 : 39] The work to get us all back to that original purpose. The purpose that he established at the beginning of creation in allowing us to have fellowship with him in holiness and perfection.

We broke that. Adam and Eve broke that in the garden. We continue to break that every single day of our existence through our sin. Through our rebellion against God.

But God, by his mercy, is made a way. And his heart is to ransom all of creation to reset it back to its original design.

As John writes in Revelation chapter 5, 9 and 10, they sang a new song saying, Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals.

For you were slain and by your blood you ransomed people. And here it is. For God from every tribe and language and people and nation.

[4 : 52] And you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God. And they shall reign on the earth. Now that should sound really familiar because that's what God had established with Abraham and with Moses and with the people when he built this covenant relationship with them at Mount Sinai.

Abraham, of course, was much earlier. But they were the covenant people pulled and made distinct because of Abraham. They were sons of Abraham. But this covenant relationship, this contract that God wrote up for the people that was to establish how this relationship was supposed to work, was signed and sealed at Mount Sinai.

And at that time, God made his people a kingdom of priests. That was the goal. That was the plan. But his people throughout history had broken that contract, had violated God's purpose in their life.

And instead of saying, what a privilege of welcoming the world, welcoming the nations into this same relationship that we enjoy, of featuring and being an illustration of the welcoming relationship of God, the presence of God among his people, they said, ha, we're distinct people.

We're set apart people. We are God's people. And you have nothing to do with him. That was not God's plan.

[6 : 38] That was not God's purpose. God's purpose was to establish in Israel a welcoming cry, a kingdom of priests that would call the nations to himself.

He will establish that purpose once and for all when the end has finally come. That's his purpose, to welcome the nations before him.

And this morning, if you are a Gentile like me, you are an individual who has experienced that mercy and compassion of God, a part that has come through his son, Jesus Christ, who is a part of Israel and a light to the Gentiles like God intended him to be.

That's what Israel was supposed to do. That was their purpose. Because God had in mind to set all things new, to redeem all of creation, to bring them back to himself.

We find in our passage this morning in Nehemiah chapter 5, another breaking, another fracture, oppression that is taking place among God's people.

[7 : 51] That Nehemiah, who is a foreshadowing of the Christ figure, who echoes the heart of God, recognizes the oppression that is taking place and demonstrates a righteous indignation and hatred for what he sees.

We don't have any points this morning. I don't have any notes to share. I don't have any three simple truths to convey to you today. I just want to talk through this narrative.

I want us to look at the history and to see the relevance of what is happening here in Nehemiah chapter 5. And I don't think there's a better time for us to see this.

You know, by God's providence, back in late October, early November of last year, I started putting together the preaching schedule for 2020.

I had no idea what was going to happen on June 7th in the couple of weeks leading up to this, but God did. He knew the fracture and the divide and the racial tension that is happening across our country.

[9 : 10] He knew that was going to happen. He is not surprised. And so he put us here in Nehemiah chapter 5 so we can understand that God has a hatred for oppression and God has a remedy for oppression.

It comes through Jesus Christ and it is a catalyst through his people. We are representatives of God to help remedy the oppression that we see in the world around us.

God has called us to be agents of mercy and compassion, kingdom of priests, called by God to be a light to the nations, to bring in the harvest of worshipers who will sit before the throne and say worthy is the Lamb.

What a privilege. What an awesome privilege. But what a tremendous responsibility. It's not going to happen unless we begin to recognize the significance of this issue.

This is not a tangential issue. This is not a superficial issue. This is a gospel issue. And we must understand and have a heart for this issue just the way that Nehemiah had a heart for this issue and just the way that Jesus had a heart for this issue.

[10 : 28] Nehemiah chapter 5. We're going to begin our time in verse 6. Nehemiah chapter 5, verse 6.

It says this, I was very angry when I heard their outcry in these words. Now if you're wondering what words we're talking about, it's the words of the people who have come to present the problem of their oppression that they're experiencing.

Now I don't know if any of you have ever experienced oppression or some degree of being taken advantage of. I was trying to think in my own life how I've experienced some oppression and it's very mild in comparison with maybe some of the things that you've experienced.

I thought about how do authorities or people who are put in positions of honor, how do they maybe abuse their privilege?

And how have I experienced that for myself? And I thought, well, you know, many, many years ago when I went to buy a used car. Anyone ever buy a used car?

[11 : 46] Okay. All right. I think used car dealers, you know, they kind of have, there's a little title that goes along with them. They're kind of known as slippery, kind of known as those who want to take advantage.

And so if you're a used car, Salmon, please forgive me. It's not against you. Just recognize that there's some who are out there who make a bad name for you.

Okay. Well, so I went to buy my first used car, the first car I'd ever bought before in my life. And I walked onto the lot and I'm sure they could smell fresh blood.

Okay. They know, ha ha, this guy is a novice. He has never bought a car before. Look at him. And the sharks were swirling. I could see them. They could smell blood.

They came all after me at the same time. So I'm looking around and this was the age before the internet. So I couldn't do some pre-shopping and kind of look around. So I showed up at the lot.

[12 : 48] I expected, you know, kind of like the grocery store. You go to the grocery. I'm kind of a guy. You go to the grocery store. Shopping is you find something you like and you take it home. Not that you go to this lot and then the next lot and you find the best deal in town.

I didn't know how to do that yet. So look at the sticker. It was about the price I could afford. Looked at the car. Yeah, that's about the car that I want to have.

And so I went into the contract place where you sign the forms and the contract that they gave me was \$5,000 more than the sticker I saw on the car.

I'm thinking, what is happening here? And, you know, when they have costs like stereo system and hubcaps and wheels and like, that's not included in the car?

A pole street. You know, the back seat. I'm kidding. Those weren't on there. But just the inflation of these prices and then on top of it all, because I didn't have credit yet, the interest rate was like astronomical.

[14 : 04] I said, well, I guess this is what you do when you buy a used car. So I signed the dotted line. I drove away out of the parking lot with my brand new car and immediately, buyer's remorse.

Huh. What was I thinking? What an idiot. Instead of having an advocate, instead of having somebody come alongside me and put their hand on my shoulder and say, let me just tell you how things are supposed to work on a used car lot.

They inflate the prices on purpose about 50% so that they can negotiate a little bit. That's what you're supposed to do when you go to a used car lot. You're supposed to negotiate. Well, I didn't know about negotiating and I didn't have an advocate.

So I walked out of that place and they absolutely took me for a ride. Taken advantage of. Well, about a week and a half later, I totaled the car.

Which made matters worse. Fortunately, God allowed my insurance company to cover the entire cost of a car that the price was already inflated.

[15 : 13] So God was kind even though the dealer was not. And so I never made that mistake again because I understood what oppression was like and I recognized what to look for in the midst of that issue.

And here we come to Nehemiah chapter 5 and here is a group of people who should know better. They should know better. They have experienced oppression firsthand.

It went all the way back to Egypt. It went all the way back to their captivity for hundreds of years in Egypt. So much so that Nehemiah prefaces this chapter, chapter 5, verse 1, by talking about an outcry of the people which was reminiscent of the outcry, same word, of the people who were under oppression in Egypt.

Egypt. They should have known better. And God, by His mercy, led them out of Egypt. God, by His mercy, led them through the Red Sea.

God, by His mercy, allowed them to be preserved in the midst of 40 years of wilderness wandering. And by His mercy, established a covenant with them, a kingdom of priests to our God.

[16 : 38] By His mercy, He established a relationship with them. He gave them access to His very self through the tabernacle at the time and through the ordinances that they celebrated, the rituals of sacrifice through the Lamb.

The Passover Lamb, which was the very first thing that they did to demonstrate that they'd been ransomed as a people, which was a foreshadowing of what Christ would inevitably do for them in ransoming a people.

That was the pathway of freedom. And their wilderness wandering, the exile out of Egypt and their entrance back into the promised land was marked by the bookends of Passover.

It was supposed to be this clarion call. You have been redeemed. You are a set-apart people. And you are intended to be the kinds of people who will showcase the wonder of your God in calling the nations to me.

My presence will mark you. Be the kind of people who will welcome others into a relationship with me. You've given them plenty of opportunities to do that.

[17 : 58] Rahab being the first in Jericho, by the way, who was in the lineage of Jesus. Another hallmark of the redemptive work of God in drawing the nations to himself.

Nehemiah, of course, understood the challenges that this people faced. His heart in Nehemiah chapter 1 breaks for the people.

We find him in Nehemiah chapter 1, verse 4. There is a weeping and a mourning of fasting and a praying. His heart is absolutely broken and shattered over the oppression that he sees of this people.

He bleeds for them. His heart is burdened for them. He is interested in their advancement and helping to remove the oppression that they feel.

So Nehemiah begins to pray and God says, Nehemiah, you're the guy. You want to see the oppression of this people being removed? Well, I'm going to use you as a catalyst to make it happen.

[19 : 09] So I'm sending you back to Jerusalem. So Nehemiah goes and he helps the people begin to build the wall. The wall which would be an extension of the temple.

The wall in Jerusalem which was supposed to showcase the presence of God among his people. This was God's city. This was Zion. This is where God dwelt.

This is where you could enjoy the presence of God as a people. So as Nehemiah begins to build these walls with the people, they encounter oppression from the enemies.

It begins with a small set of tidal waves and opposition and mounts into this great tidal wave of oppression by the entire region surrounding them.

So they're totally encompassed by opposition all around them. I'm sure Nehemiah expected this kind of opposition but he wasn't prepared for what he was going to hear in chapter 5.

[20 : 13] He wasn't prepared for the fact that the people would oppress themselves. Of course the enemies would oppress them but their own brothers?

How could it be? Nearly takes his breath away. You can see that in Nehemiah chapter 6 excuse me 5 verse 6 I was very angry he says when I heard their outcry in these words.

There were three groups of people that came to Nehemiah to express the kind of opposition that they were experiencing. The first group of individuals is those they didn't have any property so they didn't have anything to barter with but they did have large families.

They were merchants they were tradesmen they may have been shepherds they were trying to do business in Jerusalem but their trade was shut down because there wasn't anyone coming through Jerusalem anymore.

All of the tradesmen from the surrounding regions avoided that place because they knew it was a hotbed of controversy a hotbed of conflict not to mention the fact that there was a lot of work going on for the last month and a half.

[21 : 24] So their merchandise and their ability to buy and to sell was shut down. They had no access to money. To make matters worse their families were large and so trying to make a way for their family to survive was difficult if not impossible.

Certainly they would have gone to the nobles and to the wealthy to say can you please spare us a little funds can you just loan us a little cash but because there was nothing in it for the nobles they were unwilling to share they were unwilling to help.

They had not been gripped by the reality of God's mercy in their own life. They had not really come to terms with how God had called them to be a kingdom of priests.

They had not really understood the image bearing testimony they were supposed to have among the nations. They didn't really care about that anyway. The second group involves those who did own some property.

vineyards and fields and homes we find them in verse 3. They used this as collateral these vineyards and farms as a collateral in order to get some money in their pockets to buy some food to buy some grain.

[22 : 44] They figured that as long as the harvest came and it was just a month away they knew that as soon as the harvest would come they'd be able to pay off those debts. the challenge again was compounded by two factors.

The first factor was a famine that you see there in verse 3. Now the famine isn't a famine as you and I would think where there's no access to water and everything is parched and dry.

The famine that is talked about here in Nehemiah chapter 5 verse 3 is the kind of famine that the crops just don't produce the way they would in a healthy year. famine has come the crops are not producing the kind of yield they need to pay off the debts and to make matters worse there is interest put on top of everything they could never undo or turn this thing around without a banner bumper crop.

So now they're looking at a mortgage that is upside down. They're looking at property that they're going to be handing over to these wealthy nobles.

who are going to now take it from them because of the exchange that they made in this mortgage deal. As a result they have no hope of inheritance to pass on to their children.

[24 : 02] They have no hope of future income. They're looking at a life of poverty from this point on. They were stuck. The third group is the group that also had vineyards and farms and property and because of the heavy taxation taxation of about 40%.

Now we just went through tax season. Were your taxes something that you really look forward to? Yippee! I get to pay my taxes this year!

Alright! It's about 15%. I love saying goodbye to that money and I don't think there's anybody in this room that would raise their hand on that one. Imagine we think 15% is bad.

Imagine 40% and 50% half of your income gone! This is a dire time.

This is a strained time. And so in order to pay their debts their solution is we understand we need this property. We want to hand it down as an inheritance to our children.

[25 : 11] Maybe we can just exercise the option built into the law that says our kids can be indentured servants for the next several years until we pay off our debt or until the year of jubilee.

Every seven years things would reset back to the beginning and regardless of what that debt might be the servants would be returned back to their original position.

That might not be so bad at least in seven years from now we'll all be free. There was a problem though. Again interest rates were too high.

And again the children that were given to these nobles were then sold as property to the nations.

There was no opportunity now for them to be redeemed for them to be reclaimed. The year of jubilee didn't matter anymore. They were exercising these nobles, were exercising the option of, which wasn't really an option allowed in the law, they were exercising their option of selling these kids now into slavery and making good on this exchange.

[26 : 27] sons and daughters sold into slavery. Notice what it says in verse five. Yet we are forcing, this is in the middle of the verse, our sons and daughters to be slaves and some of our daughters have already been enslaved.

The repetition that you see there is intentional because Nehemiah is describing an enslavement that is in addition to the enslavement that is happening to sons.

Which means that these daughters also have been sold into slavery in the sense that they've been given as wives to these nobles. You can almost see them around the table.

And I almost hate to, maybe I shouldn't. It's too late now. I guess I will. They could have written the book The Art of the Deal. They could have written that book because they're sitting around talking to one another, hey have you seen the deal that I did yesterday?

Doggy, it was amazing. I saw this mom and dad walk up to me, they were asking for access to some money and I said, I'm sorry, just don't have anything to give to you right now.

[27 : 47] I could tell it had been at least a week since they'd eaten last, kind of an emaciated bunch and so I knew they were desperate. Because if they were looking sick and thin, then I can only imagine how thin their children are.

So I told them, tell you what, you know, you mortgage your property and maybe I can find some cash. And now the interest rate is going to be 20% but it's better to have some food in your tummy than to all starve, right?

Or I got another option for you. Your sons and your daughters, they look pretty strong. I can put them to work in my fields and they can make me some money.

I understand that you have your own harvest to do but your crops aren't that good anyway. And again, if you want your kids to survive, then at least they'll be getting a good meal every single day if they're working for me.

Or, you know, your daughter's pretty attractive and my wife's kind of sick. She's not been able to do her normal wifely duties for the last several months.

[29 : 05] I could use a good looking young girl. why don't you give her to me as a second wife? That's the kind of abuse we're talking about in this passage.

And there's no wonder why Nehemiah is so enraged. They should have known better. They should have understood and thought about the oppression that they had personally experienced and the oppression of their ancestors.

They should have known about the 160 years of slavery that they have been experiencing up to this point. For 160 years, they've either been under Babylonian rule or Persian rule or underneath the mob rule there in Judah.

Their parents and grandparents breathed and lived the adversity and opposition, the prejudice that was built in to that region.

They should have known it best. It should have created in them a heart of mercy and compassion for their fellow brothers, but it didn't. They were too interested in their own profit.

[30 : 20] Injustice was a means to an end for them. They had their own families to think about. They had their own future to secure. They had their own portfolio to advance.

So taking advantage of their brothers was just natural. Adding to their distress was just a necessity.

Profiting off of their misfortune was a necessary commodity. But Nehemiah presses in in verse 7. He says, I took counsel with myself and I brought charges against the nobles and the officials.

I said to them, you are exacting interests, each from his brother. And I held a great assembly against them. You see, Nehemiah was familiar with the Mosaic law.

Nehemiah understood it and probably had much of it memorized. In his prayer in chapter 1, much of that is lifted directly out of Deuteronomy. It's clear that he has a great appreciation and understanding of the law.

[31 : 29] law. And he applies it here. He understands that interest on your fellow brother is forbidden from the law. Deuteronomy chapter 23, 19 to 20 would have guided him.

You shall not charge interest on loans to your brothers. Interest on money, interest on food, interest on anything that is lent for interest. You may charge a foreigner interest, but you may not charge your brother interest.

that the Lord your God may bless you in all that you undertake, in the land that you are entering to take possession of it. Charging interest was forbidden by the law.

In understanding the law would be to understand the heart of God. because at the nature of it, at the very core of this issue was not just checking a punch list of doing things that God has asked them to do.

Because the Mosaic law was not just a list of good suggestions in order to be a happy people. The law was a living illustration of God among the nations.

[32 : 45] The law was a portrait of his holiness, his righteousness, his character in his heart. To follow the law was to worship God and to recognize the pathway to fellowship with him.

To enter in and to express their relationship with him as a covenant people. And thus, to break the covenant was to misrepresent God's divine order.

To break the covenant was to misunderstand God's heart. To break the covenant was to pervert God's image in the world. And from an Old Testament perspective, it was a gospel issue because it was a covenant issue.

It was a Godward issue. Nehemiah understood this. He understood the significance of the law.

He understood that it echoed the heart of a compassionate, merciful, oppressive, removing, powerful God.

[33 : 55] That is God's heart. It was a portrait of his personhood. It was a window into his holiness. And through the law, God describes how the people should relate to him and how they must relate to one another.

Both were a reflection of the God that they served, the God that they worshipped. Both were a welcoming invitation to the nations to say, here's how God's people look because here is how their God looks.

Here's what their God does, what their God values, who their God is. Will you be one of them and represent their God the same way?

And it is God's heart as creator and sustainer, as the originator of life, who imparted his image into us as his people.

We are image bearers of God. We have the responsibility then to preserve the dignity of the image that God has set upon every person, wherever they might be on this earth.

[35 : 12] It's God's intention to preserve the people, the image, as image bearers of him, and to protect them rather than to injure them. Now Nehemiah understands that heart and seeks to preserve that dignity.

We see that in verse eight. I said to them, we as far as we are able have brought back our Jewish brothers who have been sold to the nations. But you even sell your brothers that they may be sold to us.

They were silent and could not find a word to say. Nehemiah committed himself personally to ransom. He echoed the heart of his future Messiah.

He was a future picture of what Christ would accomplish. He personally redeemed those who were sold into slavery in the nations, redeemed them back so that they could be free.

But you can almost see the cycle happening. Poverty, it leads to indentured service to the nobles who then sell them to slavery to the nations. Nehemiah sees it, rescues them, and the cycle continues all over again.

[36 : 25] And Nehemiah, who's now made aware of this issue, he says, enough is enough. Don't you understand the significance of this issue?

Don't you see how this is a perverted picture of the gospel, a perverted picture of how God called you to be his covenant people? But his initial confrontation is met with silence in verse 7.

Met with silence again in verse 8. And in verse 9, Nehemiah brings it to the preeminent place.

He wants to bring the real issue to the forefront. He wants them to understand the real reason why this is significant. In verse 9, he says this, the thing that you are doing is not good.

Ought you not to walk in the fear of our God to prevent the taunts of the nations, of our enemies? You see what's taking place there?

[37 : 29] You see what Nehemiah understands as the foundation for this issue? You are disrupting the image of God among the peoples.

You are making a mockery of God by your oppression of the poor class. Instead of removing oppression, you are compounding it and thus perverting the gospel, thus perverting the image of God among the peoples.

Don't you have any fear in you at all? Don't you know what God did to the Egyptians? Don't you know how he crushed them? You put yourself in the same path of discipline when you refuse to follow the pathway of God to remove oppression.

He is the God of mercy, not of selfishness. He is the God who redeems, not sells into slavery. He is the God who removes oppression, not compounds it.

Nehemiah understood the heart of God. He elevates the primary purpose for obedience in the midst of their attention. You have been called the kingdom of priests.

[38 : 41] You have been called a light to the Gentiles. But all they are doing now is laughing at you. They see a God that looks just like their God. They see a people that looks just like them.

There is no distinctiveness at all. You are called to draw attention to the wonder of a compassionate, merciful God. You have been called to remove oppression, not to compound it.

We would expect that if this is God's standard in the past, that this would be a feature of the ministry of Jesus when he steps foot on this planet, and certainly it is.

Let me just draw your attention briefly to the person and the description of Jesus' ministry when he first steps into the public view.

It is found for us in Luke chapter 4, verses 18 and 19. How does Jesus describe his ministry? How does Jesus help to set forth the purpose of what he came to accomplish?

[39 : 54] How do we understand from Jesus what he intends to do through his ministry? Well, we see it right at the beginning. The first stepping into, the spotlight of Jesus here in Luke chapter 4, we find in verse 18, the spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

You see Nehemiah? The reminiscence of that Christ-like figure in the Old Testament now showing up in the real deal, the real image of God.

God made flesh and dwelling among his people and brings his purpose to bear in his ministry through his son, Jesus Christ, to set at liberty those who are oppressed.

That's the heart of our Savior. But what is the greatest oppression? What's the greatest means by which we need to be delivered from?

[41 : 14] What's the thing that enslaves us all, all of mankind, for all of history has enslaved us? Sin. We need God to liberate us from sin.

He did that through his son, Jesus Christ. Jesus who was sent to proclaim good news and to liberate mankind by allowing us to enjoy the freedom that comes through relationship with himself.

That is the first and foremost oppression that must be resolved. And Jesus came to resolve that oppression. Have you experienced freedom from that oppression?

Liberation from that slavery? But in order for Jesus to demonstrate a commitment to that eternal reality, Jesus wanted to showcase or illustrate that through a physical reality.

He did that through his ministry on earth. To set at liberty those who are oppressed in a physical way. To set at liberty those who are oppressed by blindness, by leprosy, and by demonic activity.

[42 : 32] Jesus illustrated his ability to set people free. He did that physically to help to feature and point to that spiritual reality he intends to do for us through his son, Jesus Christ, through faith in Jesus.

Jesus. But notice how this happens. It must happen through a relationship with God. You cannot be a catalyst for removing oppression if you have not personally experienced that freedom.

Do you know Jesus this morning? Have you asked Jesus for forgiveness for your sins? Have you come to the place where you recognize the bondage that sin has brought to your life and you've said, Jesus, please be my Savior.

Please forgive me for sin and to free me into slavery to you because your yoke is easy. Your burden is light. And notice, secondly, that it must happen through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

It was the Holy Spirit that empowered Jesus to speak this text. It was the power of the Holy Spirit working through Jesus to provide that freedom.

[43 : 57] That same power dwells in every person who has a relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ. You can only be a catalyst for removing oppression if God is indwelling you with his Holy Spirit.

But as those who follow in the footsteps of God, we have been given this great privilege and great responsibility. The privilege and responsibility of recognizing oppression and seeking to remove oppression wherever it may show up.

especially in this day and age as it relates to racism. I don't know how that looks, but it begins with a heart.

A heart like Nehemiah that desires to be used of God to change the world around them. Empowered by the Spirit, armed with the gospel so that we can be used of God to remove the greatest oppression, but that God works in our heart to create a sensitivity to remove oppression wherever it may be.

May God help us to do that. Let me pray. Father, I feel so inadequate to be used of you in this way, but I know that you have given your Holy Spirit to us to accomplish the impossible.

[45 : 30] Paul is praying for the church of Ephesus in Ephesians chapter 1, and he's praying that that church would come to understand the riches of your power towards those who are in Christ.

God, may we come to really appreciate the great wealth of your power that's accessible to us through your Holy Spirit. Give us a heart of Jesus to address the oppression that we see all around us.

May we be useful. May we be a portrait of our beautiful Savior, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Thanks for coming this morning.

Good to see all of you. Hope you have a great week. Blessings as you go. Thank you.