Power, Protests, and Perspective

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[0:00] Amen. Open with me to Nehemiah chapter 5.

You see the outlines from the last several weeks as we have gone through the book of Nehemiah together.! And I just include those in there to help you to be able to, if you miss a week, get a sense of what we have been studying to get a reminder in your heart and mind of what we have looked at. Tonight we come to chapter 5. I'm really excited about our time in the Word this evening because not only is there a lot in chapter 5 as far as the story and the history that I think is important, at the back end of this as just a part of the flow of Nehemiah 5, I think are some really helpful lessons on leadership.
Leadership, the book of Nehemiah is much more than just a book on leadership. You never want to reduce the book of Nehemiah to just leadership principles. It's so much more than that.
But it does include that. And so for all of you who are part of leadership in any way, the back half of chapter 5 has a special word that I think will encourage you.
[1:21] And before you tend to think to yourself, well, I'm not a leader. I don't have some specific title. Recognize leadership doesn't always have to come with a title. Leadership includes the way that you live your life and the people that you influence.

And if you have influence over anybody's life at all, that is a measure of leadership. And so I hope that you'll be encouraged as we work our way through chapter 5.
Just to remind ourselves from the book of Nehemiah, the people of God have been taken by exile between 605 and 586. The people are taken away in three waves of deportations.
Cyrus, the Medo-Persian king, decrees that people can go back. They don't all go back. Some do. And just as they were taken out in three waves of exile, they return home in three waves.
Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah are the three who lead those series of returns. Remember from the book of Nehemiah that he has been told, when he inquired how is the city and how are the people, he was told that the people were not doing well.
[2:32] And a part of that is because the city walls were in shambles. He gets permission from the king. After four months of praying and fasting, the king, he asked him if he can return.

The king says yes. Nehemiah goes back and he begins to organize and lead the people. We've looked at a lot of that already in the first four chapters. Opposition comes, as it often does.
And just as the book unfolds, what we see is in chapter 4 and chapter 6, most of the opposition, it's from the outsiders.
Other nations, other leaders, other government officials from other places, they are opposed to the work and they try to discourage them from doing it.
In chapter 5, the opposition comes from within. And in terms of whether it's ministry or just leadership of any kind, the opposition from the outside is something you often have to deal with, but at least in my experience, opposition from the outside is just expected.
[3:46] You just expect the world to be opposed to the things of God. You expect the world to persecute those who follow God. In chapter 5, it's a much more personal thing because the opposition comes from within.

It's not the outsiders in chapter 5. It's his own people. And the wounds from those that we love most are the most painful of all.
Nehemiah is going to lead them to finish the wall. They're going to finish it in a remarkable 52 days. But before we get to the end of the story, we come to chapter 5 where we will see how this unfolds.
Make note first, in verses 1-5, there's a declaration of corruption. There's a declaration of corruption. As we read this text, you're going to see the declaration, what it is that has been corrupt, that's getting called out.

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And the first thing that we see is that the people are starving. Verse 1, Now there arose a great outcry of the people and of their wives against their Jewish brothers.
[4:54] Just stop for a moment and just catch what we've just read. The outcry of the people and of their wives against their Jewish brothers. This is the opposition from within.

For there were those who said, With our sons and our daughters we are many, so let us get grain that we may eat and keep alive. What's happened is, with the booming population, the people who have moved back, there's many more people living there, and so it makes sense.
It's harder to provide for everyone. Plus, a number of people have been called out to go work on the rebuilding project on the wall, which leaves fewer workers in the field.
And so they cry out, We are starving. They're not just starving, they're also losing their property. Verse 3, There were also those who said, We are mortgaging our fields, our vineyards, and our houses, to get grain, because of the famine.
What's happening here, the wealthy are making the poor people mortgage their fields, mortgage their houses, in order for them to buy food from the wealthy to eat. So, as you've got all these problems, you've got some from the inside, their own people, who are seeing all of this difficulty as a way to be able to line their own pockets.
[6:19] It would be in some ways today, if there was a famine among us, and those who were wealthy among us had plenty of food stored up, and those who were poor among us had no food, and so you begin to see the poor people in your Sunday school class as people you could make them sell you their house to give them food.

You have something they need, and rather than serve or love your own people, you see this as a way to take advantage of them. That's what's going on in the area. It seems as the people are crying out here in the early parts of chapter 5 that everything is against them, even the weather. There's a famine. No rain. Few crops. More people. Less food. They're also being forced to borrow money to pay their taxes, verse 4.
And there were those who said, we have borrowed money for the king's tax on our fields and our vineyards. So, the Persian Empire, who's still over the people here, Persian Empire is charging taxes on the people.
The Jewish people, or many of them, being forced to borrow money from their own people to pay the taxes, and they're being charged excessive interest to do it.
[7:43] That is against the law of Moses. This is disobeying God's own word of how you are to deal with your own people, but from even within the camp, within the people.

They're seeing all of these circumstances and situations as opportunities to take advantage of the people around them in order to make themselves wealthy. Instead of caring for each other, and helping and loving and serving each other, they begin to splinter apart.
A fourth act of corruption going on is people are losing their own children, verse 5. Now our flesh is as the flesh of our brothers. Our children are as their children, yet we are forcing our sons and our daughters to be slaves.
And some of our daughters have already been enslaved. But it is not in our power to help it, for other men have our fields and our vineyards. The complaint of corruption is that in this time of famine, in this time of struggle, and people don't have workers in their field, taxes are being demanded, what's happening is people from among their own people are saying, if you need food, I've got food, I'll charge you a great sum to get it, or if you don't have money, I'll take over property of your house, I'll take over property of your vineyard, it's mine, so that you have something to eat.
And now, another charge that is given is they're even being forced to sell their own children into slavery for them to be able to have means to provide for themselves to eat.
[9:23] These are people who are a part of the community. People who would claim to be the people of God. People who are, in one hand, claiming to be a part of the covenant family, and in the other way, seeing every opportunity as a way to take advantage of somebody else.

At the same time, this amazing work of rebuilding the wall is taking place, and that's not just a physical work, that's a spiritual work. And as we studied a few weeks ago in great detail, it was a very organized work.
It was a very unified work. You had all kinds of people working together on the part of the wall that they were directly responsible for. And we saw goldsmiths working and perfumers working, and we saw a man with his daughters working, and people were just shoulder to shoulder right next to

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them, the chapter said, working together in a unified way, in a compelling way, in a committed way. And while that's going on, there were a couple of guys that were a part of other nations that would come forward, other areas came forward to try to create problems for Nehemiah and his people, but that was opposition from the outside.
When it's opposition from the outside, he told them, we're going to continue what God has called us to do. And he said, we're going to pray to our God for safety, chapter 4, verse 9, and we're going to post a watchman on the wall.
[10:54] We're going to pray to God and trust in Him, and we're going to do what wisdom does. We're going to watch out so that if someone tries to come to attack us, we'll be ready. And the people were working on the wall with a tool in one hand and a weapon in the other hand.

Working to do what God has called them to do, and ready to defend themselves if they need to. That's the opposition from the outside. It may take work, it may take sacrifice, but you don't spend a lot of time worrying about it.
You just say, we're going to do what God calls us to do, we're going to act in a way of wisdom, and we're going to trust God, but we will not let the opponents or the outsiders drive us into disobedience.
But now, the corruption is from the inside. At the very same time, this beautiful work is being done, there are people who are taking advantage of the weaker and the poorer.
At the very same time that there is this unified work to rebuild the city walls for the glory of God and the safety of the people, there are people within the camp who are blatantly disregarding the law of Moses.
[12:06] And while they would say, we trust in the Lord and we want to follow the Lord, what they really want to do is just make themselves wealthy, and if it comes at the expense of other people around them, so be it.

The declaration of corruption is given to us in those four ways in verses 1-5. Verses 6-13, that declaration turns to a demand for change.
There's a demand for things to change. Look at verse 6. You see the anger expressed. I was very angry when I heard their outcry in these words. We're not going to see it in this chapter. We're going to see it in a few weeks.
When Nehemiah gets angry, Nehemiah gets angry. We don't get to see all of how he expresses his anger yet, but get ready, it's coming.
I was very angry when I heard their outcry and I heard these words. Now, I do want to make mention to you that it is possible to be angry for the right reason, at the right person, at the right time, in the right way.
[13:17] There is a time where anger is justified. We see that in the life of Jesus. Jesus twice goes to the temple and cleanses it out, drives it out because of the sin that's going on because people were in a similar way when Jesus on the Passion Week rides into town and goes to the temple.

He goes that first day and observes what's going on and what he sees are people who are the religious leaders taking advantage of people, doing everything they can to line their own pockets. And Jesus observed that the people that were there were saying, you've got to pay your tax and you can't do it with that coin from where you traveled in from. You have to do it from our coins and they would give them a very unfair exchange rate and they would say, you've got to have an animal to sacrifice and you brought an animal but it's not perfect.
It's not clean. You can't use that but we'll sell you an animal at a very inflated rate about 15 times what would normally be paid for. And Jesus observed that in the temple, this place of worship, it had become what he called a den of thieves.
And the terminology there in the New Testament is very interesting because a den is a place where thieves would hang out because they were safe. The den was a place of refuge.
[14:37] And here they are at the temple and these thieves felt safe because the leaders were the ones that were in on it. Nobody there to call them out on it.

The most powerful leaders of the day are the ones lining their pockets to get wealthy. And Jesus says, that's it. And he drives them away.
It's possible to be angry at the right reason, the right person at the right time in the right way. Now, you and I have to be very, very careful because while we love the Lord and we have a new heart, we also have a flesh still.

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And it's very difficult, I think, for us to trust that we're angry at the right time at the right person for the right reason in the right way.
Our pride and our fleshly anger get so quickly pulled up to the surface in that. But it's possible to see sin and you ought to feel angry over that.
[15:52] I want to caution you to be very careful when you're angry. Ephesians 4.26, be angry and do not sin. You can be angry and not sin, but I'll tell you there's a reason why that warning is there.

It's because in our flesh so often in our anger we do sin. So we've got to be very careful. James 1.19, know this, my brothers, let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to become angry.
If you find yourself angry all the time, easily angered, be careful. James warns us through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to be slow to become angry.
But Nehemiah hears what's going on, observes what's going on, and sees how people are lying and cheating and stealing from each other and there's anger involved and then in verse 7 there's confrontation. I took counsel with myself.
That means he took time to think, to slow down, to collect his thoughts, to get his emotion under control.
[17:08] He's going to deal with it and he's going to confront them, but he wisely first takes counsel with himself. We would do well to do that.

When you're angry, stop and take counsel with yourself before you speak, before you respond, before you post. Stop and seek counsel in your heart.
Is your motive to glorify God? Is your motive that you're zealous for the truth? Or are you just defending yourself?
Or are you just arguing because you want to be proven right? Take counsel with yourself. And then, the verse goes on to say, and I brought charges against the nobles and the officials.
These are the ones profiting from the high interest rates. He goes on to say, I said to them, you are exacting interest, each from his brother. And I held a great assembly against them and said to them, we, as far as we are able, have bought back our Jewish brothers who have been sold to the nations, but you even sell your brothers that they may be sold to us.
[18:30] Let me paraphrase what Nehemiah is saying here. We have been through this before and now we're doing it to ourselves. We've experienced what happens when outsiders come and take advantage of us and are heavy handed toward us and mistreat us.

We've experienced this. We've been through this and now, we're the very ones doing it to our own brothers. What's happening is, help you to understand kind of what he's exactly referring to, there are people who are saying that we can't afford to eat, we can't afford to pay our taxes, we can't afford what it costs to live and those who have the money are saying we will give you money but they're giving them an exorbitant exchange or interest rate or just taking their house or taking their land or even taking their children.
Here's where it gets really dark. They would say, I'm going to take your child, I'm going to take your land, I'm going to take your money, I'm going to take your houses, I'm going to take your vineyard, I'm even going to take your child because you have no other way to pay right now knowing that when the people gather together, Nehemiah would call on the people to take a collection to be able to buy these children out of slavery and so there's people saying, I will continue to propagate this knowing the people are generous and they will buy the children back out of slavery so I cannot only take advantage of you, I can take advantage of the generosity of all the people and I keep making money after money after money in this pyramid scheme in some sense.
I've got what you need rather than helping you, I'm going to take from you. I'll take that which is most personal to you knowing that the other people in our community are gracious and generous and they'll get out of their pocket to give back to you what I've taken as interest or property for myself.
So he holds this assembly and he brings this charge against him. Look at the next part of your verse. And they were silent and could not find a word to say.
[21:00] They were confronted. They were in the wrong. Undeniably in the wrong. Verse 9, So I said, 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, our enemies, notice what Nehemiah says to them here.

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Don't you fear the Lord? Don't you understand that God sees everything you're doing? Don't you understand that while you may be able to get by with this in a human sense, don't you understand you're accountable to God with your life?
And don't you understand that maybe today in a human sense you're the one with the power but you're going to stand before the Lord who has all the power? Don't you fear God?
But it wasn't just about what was going to happen to them. Look back again at verse 9. Ought you not to walk in the fear of our God watch what he says to prevent the taunts of the nations our enemies.
[22:24] In other words their disobedience gave the wrong understanding to the nations about what it means to be the people of God.

this isn't just a case of don't you fear God because you may get in trouble you may get disciplined something may happen to you.
This is saying don't you understand that as the covenant people of God that outsiders see you and watch you and notice how you treat people and as far as they can tell being people of the covenant means nothing.
You live just like they do. You take advantage of people just like they do. You lie and you cheat and you rob and you steal and you take advantage of the weak just like they do.
Don't you care that the nations aren't seeing a true representation of who our God is? Pray we sang tonight as for me and my house pray that as for you and your house and your family that you would live in such a way that when people watch how you live and how you treat people they will understand you're not like the world.
[23:41] Be different. You're called out from the world. You're set apart from the world. And when people in the church who claim the name of Christ cheat and lie and take advantage of people, the unbelieving world says I guess you're just like us after all.

you go to church on Sundays but other than that we're the same. You don't have anything we need because we're filled with violence, we're filled with pride, we're filled with greed and I see that's what you have too.
I guess your God doesn't produce change at all. Nehemiah says don't you fear the Lord but it's not just about the personal issue it creates with them, it's saying don't you care about how you represent the character of our God.
I can't tell you how many times I think of that when I watch so-called pastors and preaching that goes on today.
I just think to myself, you're lying to these people, you're cheating your people, you're trying to just get money out of the pockets of the people for yourself, you're doing all kinds of things, all just to advance your own name, don't you care that the people who don't know God would see what you're doing and think to themselves, this gospel is of no value at all.
[25:24] So he makes a plan in verse 10, moreover, I and my brothers and my servants are lending them money and grain.

Let us abandon this exacting of interest. He says things must change. verse 11, return to them this very day their fields, their vineyards, their olive orchards, their houses, and the percentage of money, grain, wine, and oil that you have been exacting from them.
Who does this sound like a little bit to you in the New Testament? Maybe a little bit to Zacchaeus? You've been taking from people, you've been taking advantage of your people.
Stop doing that. Go and repay it. Make things right. If you really care about honoring the Lord, your life will show it.
Your life dictates your witness. He says, restore the fields, restore the vineyards, give back the homes. verse 12, then they said, we will restore these and require nothing from them.
[26:43] We will do as you say. And I called the priests and made them swear to do as they had promised. If you've never read the book of Nehemiah, to me, if you're just reading in chapter one, you have no idea what's going to happen, I don't know that I would have expected that response.

This is an encouraging thing. They've been called out on their sin. They gave no words of defense because they were completely guilty. They could have tried to do something to punish Nehemiah. These are people who are willing to take each other's children. It's a little shocking to me that they respond this way. The plan is simple.

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We're going to do what's right. We're going to make things right. And we're going to stop living like the world. The plan then leads to accountability in verse 13.
I also shook out the fold of my garment and said, so may God shake out every man from his house and from his labor who does not keep this promise.
[27:57] so may he be shaken out and emptied. And all the assembly said, Amen. So be it.

And praised the Lord. And the people did as they had promised. One of the great things that happens is when a community of people who have agreed to a certain standard hold each other accountable to actually live by that standard.
That should be true of us. We who have said that we belong to Christ, we who have said that we are a part of a church family and a congregation together, we ought to hold each other accountable. And if somebody comes to you to confront you in your sin, your first response should not be to defend your sin, it ought to be to repent. And when people do repent, the one who has gone to that person, their response should not be to hold that over their head, their response ought to be to freely forgive them.
It's a beautiful thing when unity is there among the people of God, and sometimes unity demands confrontation. Sometimes that's true in your household.
[29:30] If you've got children who are disobeying the Lord, dishonoring the Lord, you've got to love them enough to correct that. You've got to love them enough to confront them in their sin.

And when they're confronting their sin, the right response is to repent. And when someone repents of their sin, the right response is to rejoice and to freely forgive.
We had a declaration of corruption and demand for change. Then in verses 14 to 19, here at the end of the chapter, you see a third thing. It's a display of character. I'm going to show you how Nehemiah himself responds with his display of character here, but in verses 14 to 19, I also want to show you four specific things that Nehemiah does that I think great leaders need to do.
So this isn't outside of the context of the narrative of chapter 5, it still is a part of that, but within that narrative, there are some principles here that I think are very helpful for us to learn about leadership.
Notice what we learn about servant leadership here from Nehemiah. Verse 14, Here's the first thing that Nehemiah does.
[31:08] He does not take advantage of all of his privileges. He does not take advantage of all of his privileges. He's not looking just to get everything for himself.

He's not looking to say, Hey, I'm in charge here. I can get by with anything I want. I'm in charge here. I want to make everything easy for me. Verse 15, The former governors who were before me laid heavy burdens On the people and took from them their daily ration forty shekels of silver. Even their servants lorded it over the people. Nehemiah says the governors, the leaders before me, they used their position to just get everything they could for themselves, but he refused to do that. Leadership is not about getting everything you can for yourself. Leadership is about how you can lift up and serve people around you. He refused to take all of his privileges.
Here's the second thing. He kept the right perspective of God. God. He kept the right perspective of God. Look at the text. But I did not do so because of the fear of God.
[32:25] Nehemiah didn't fear when the enemies of surrounding people came to oppose him. Nehemiah didn't fear when his enemies came to try to discourage him from building the wall.

Nehemiah didn't fear when he saw there were people that were taking advantage of their own brothers. He called an assembly and called them out for their sin.
The reason why he was able to live without fear of man is because he did fear the Lord. I did not do so. I did not take advantage of people. I did not seek my own interest, he said, because of the fear of God.
This is where courage comes from to do hard things. Fear God, fear nothing else. I think it was Augustine who first said that.
Fear only God and you need not fear man. It was a proper perspective of God that put him on the path to have the right treatment of people.
[33:31] If you're in leadership in any capacity, you're going to have the opportunity to take advantage of people, to mistreat people, to elevate yourself, to take every possible perk you can.

How would you possibly as a leader keep yourself from doing things you should not do? And Nehemiah says, it was the fear of God.

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It was the very thing that he said the people who were cheating each other did not have. He said, don't you fear God? You're cheating each other?
You're taking from each other? Nehemiah says, when you live without the fear of God, you will do anything your sinful heart wants to do.
It is a proper perspective of God that will keep you on the track to treat people the way that a leader should not take advantage of them. There's a third lesson we learn from his life.
[34:46] He persevered in the work he was leading in. He persevered in the work he was leading in. Verse 16, I also persevered in the work on this wall.

And we acquire no lane and all my servants were gathered there for the work. In other words, Nehemiah says, there's still a job to be done. Yes, we've got to correct, we've got to confront, we've got to deal with sin, we've got to deal with issues, but the opposition of outsiders nor the sin of insiders is going to get us off track of what God has called us to do.
I persevered in the work. If you are a leader, one of the things you've got to do is make sure that you do not get your eyes off what God has called you to do through His Word.
The world will try to distract you, and many times even people inside the camp will try to distract you. Sometimes people you trusted in will betray you, people will try to divide you in all kinds of ways, and Nehemiah says, I'm not letting the outside forces get me to stop.
We'll pray to God, we'll post a guard, we'll have a tool in one hand, a weapon in the we're not letting outside persecution keep us from what God's called us to do, and if there's sin in the camp, we'll deal with the sin, we'll call them out, we'll confront them, we'll call them to repent, we'll call them to live right, but even the sin of the people will not stop him from leading in the work God has called him to do.
[36:14] There is a job to be done for the glory of the name of God and nothing was going to get his eyes off of that. To the parents that are here tonight, you've got to have an unwavering tenacity that says ask for me and my house.

There's a standard. There's right and there's wrong. And you're going to have all kinds of outside influences trying to discourage you.
You may at times have your own children who are trying to get you to lower your standards. And you've got to say God's called us to a certain work here.
And we're not taking our eyes off of that. We'll deal with problems as they arise. We'll confront sin as we need to. We'll deal with threats as are demanded.
But we're not taking our eyes off of what God has called us to do. If you want to be a faithful leader, a faithful parent, a faithful minister, faithful in any way the Lord has given you influence, you've got to have a tenacity that says we will not stop what God has called us to do.
[37:44] And then fourth, we see this lesson. He made preparations to bless others. He made preparations to bless others.

Verse 17, moreover, there were at my table 150 men, Jews and officials, besides those who came to us from the nations that were around us. Now what was prepared at my expense for each day was one ox and six choice sheep and birds.
And every ten days all kinds of wine in abundance. Yet for all this I did not demand the food allowance of the governor because the service was too heavy on this people.
If you put it all together, Nehemiah was in charge of feeding about 200 people a day. And he didn't look to take everything for himself that he could.
Leadership costs something. Ministry costs something. Teaching a Sunday school class costs something.
[38:56] Being a Christian in your school, being a Christian in your business costs something. Being a leader in the church costs something. Being a Christian family costs something.

And you've got to have the mindset that says we're trying to prepare to bless others. Not trying to take for ourself. Not trying to look for every advantage we can get for ourself.
We're here to be a leader that other people could be blessed. For some people, that gets old. They give and they work and they sacrifice and they labor. And they get their eyes off of who it is they serve and they start to think to themselves, I don't know that I want to give this much and sacrifice this much and absorb this much burden bearing.
Look at verse 19. Remember for my good, oh my God, all that I have done for this people.

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[40:12] You know what Nehemiah says here? He says, there's people here who don't understand how hard I've worked. Don't understand everything I've given.

There's people who don't understand how much I've withheld from myself to bless others. He's the leader. There's going to be criticism that comes his way. he says, God, these people are going to be quick to forget how I've tried to help them, how I've tried to serve them.
And so he says, God, would you remember all that I've done for these people? Here's the lesson. The pleasure of God should be enough for us. God, God, think about this with the parents in our church.
If you've got a teenager, you think your teenager understands everything you sacrifice for them? Of course not. They can't.
[41:26] You think your six-year-old understands how much you sacrifice for them? Of course not. you think people in your church understand all the hours you spend in silent prayer?

All the meals you took to someone that nobody else knew about? You think people around you know all the time that you have given of things of yourself freely to bless other people and nobody else knew about it and nobody else said thank you?
Or maybe even harder, even the very people you have served and taught and ministered to and given to and provided for, they themselves may forget just how much you did for them?
That's just real life. Nehemiah says, God, would you remember my heart? The people may not see it, and the ones who see it may not care, and the ones who see it and care may forget about it. But God, would you remember? If you're a leader, the pleasure of God has to be enough for you.
[42:44] Now let me be very clear. I think it's good for us to recognize people who are faithful servants. I think it's good for us to be grateful. I think it's wrong for us to forget or to overlook that.

I don't want to encourage us to be forgetful. I'm just saying to those who are leading and sacrificing in any capacity, just understand your God does see and your God does know.
And don't let the forgetfulness of people stop you from living for the glory and the pleasure of God. God sees, God knows, and that's enough. God does if you're married, ladies, your husband doesn't know everything you do.
He doesn't. He's not been a wife. He's not been a mom. Some husbands do a great job at showing appreciation and some don't.
[43:55] But there's not a married lady in this sanctuary who's married to a husband who fully understands all that you do. And wives, you don't understand all that your husband endures.

You don't. You may love him. I hope you do. You may appreciate him. And you may be very good at speaking that to him. But you don't know.
You don't you don't know what it's like to bear that. And children or teenagers, they may love their parents and be thankful for them, but they don't know.
But God does. God sees. God remembers. And if you're a leader, you're a parent, you're a person of influence in any way, take from this chapter that you live and you serve and you lead, not for the sake of your name, but for the glory of his name, and he knows everything you've done in worship for the sake of his name.
And let his pleasure and his delight be enough for you. Lord, we thank you tonight for your word.
[45:38] We know what it is to confront those in sin that we love. We know what it's like to be confronted. We know what it's like to be discouraged. We know what it's like to persevere.

For each person gathered here, there may be some different truth from this chapter that jumps out to them tonight. I pray for all of us, we would be encouraged to see that we are to do what your word says, no matter what.
We're to be faithful. May we be found faithful as a congregation, and as individual families.
Give us a tenacity that says we will not take our eyes off of what you've called us to do. Leadership isn't about advancing ourselves. Leadership isn't about taking every privilege or perk we could. Leadership is about serving others to help them get where you have desired and called them to be. and in the secret nights when we feel frustrated or alone or overlooked or ignored or perhaps feel like those that we have ministered to have forgotten our ministry, may we be reminded that you are the God who sees all and your reward is sufficient.
[47:13] And knowing we have honored you, we pray would always be our greatest joy. We pray tonight in the name of your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen. Amen.

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