

## New Beginnings

Nehemiah 1:5-11 and Acts 2:42

I'd just like to welcome you here today and thought I'd start by telling you a little about my background and why I believe God burdened me to start a church plant in this area.

As a child I was brought up with strong Christian influence, at a young age I asked the Lord to save me and come into my life at a young age of 7. Over the years I lived a rollercoaster of a backslidden un-repentant sinful life.

In 2005 things changed listening to a man called Dr. Alan Cairns preaching over in N. Ireland at a Bible conference, It was like I was in a boxing ring, on the ropes with punch after punch and then one blow I was on the floor and realised I was a sham before God,

I had sinned against Him all my life and I needed to repent and totally turn around from my sins forever. In these moments the scales fell from my eyes and I felt years of tension fall away. I felt a confidence and assurance that now if I die, I know the Lord will take me into glory with Him. I had a desire to be baptised as a sign to myself and others that I truly believed in the Lord as my Saviour and knew that my life had to be completely surrendered to Him.

After a lot of prayer, the Lord led me to apply for a place on a ministry training course run by Cornhill Scotland at Glasgow's Tron Church... the big church on Buchanan street near Queen St station but now on Bath Street. I was thankful to be accepted on the course and began a years training there in September of 2008 under the guidance of two experienced ministers Bob Fyall and Edward Lobb.

Throughout my time at college I was praying about what God wanted me to do with the training and instruction I was receiving. At that time my wife and I were living in the Churchill area and I was aware that although H'burgh had many churches they were all

in the town centre and there was nothing available in the Churchill/Kirkmichael area so I prayed asking God if this is where He wanted me to start a fellowship.

While at Cornhill one of the books of the Bible we studied was Nehemiah and I really fell in love with this book and believed God gave me a hunger to read and understand the lessons in it. It was through reading Nehemiah that the burden to start a church in Kirkmichael grew.

One day we can study in more detail the background of the book but for now I'll give you a brief overview.

- Nehemiah is one of the OT history books written about 400 years before the birth of Jesus making it almost 2400 years old.
- Theological scholars generally think the book was written by Ezra as it's similar in style to the book of Ezra that comes before it in the Bible.
- Although the Jews had been able to return to their homeland after years of being exiled by the Babylonians and had rebuilt the temple an attempt at rebuilding the walls had failed after attacks from enemies so they remained in ruins.
- The main theme of the book is Nehemiah's concern for Jerusalem and the Hebrew people. He wanted them to dedicate themselves to fasting and praying and to see them encouraged and motivated to rebuild the walls.

I'm going to read through Chapter 1 of Nehemiah then explain how this chapter influenced me in the belief that God wanted a church in this area.

### Read chapter 1 of Nehemiah

Nehemiah has an important role as the king's cup-bearer and his position within the palace of Shushan is one of relative importance and comfort but he's not content

because he knows that his people have been unable to complete the building of the walls and are discouraged. The task seems enormous and they have lost the desire to complete what was started.

I think we can all relate to that and at times we need someone to encourage us to finish what's been started. God really burdened Nehemiah with a desire to see the walls finished and the people encouraged by the completion of the task.

Nehemiah is so distraught at the plight of the people that he cries and mourns for them I guess in just the same way as we'd cry over our children if they made unwise choices and went down a path that we knew was harmful for them.

He fasts and prays before God... 2 disciplines we'll look at in more detail in coming weeks but both of which are just as relevant today as they were in the time of Nehemiah.

He pleaded for God to have mercy on his people and includes himself in this prayer acknowledging that he also has failed to keep Gods commands.

He even reminds God of the promises that God made with his people that if they returned to Him He would be merciful toward them and bless them.

These verses of Scripture really spoke to me and although the task of planting a church here in Kirkmichael is different the burden is just as great as Nehemiah's burden for the people of Jerusalem.

I have a real desire to see a church here that ministers to people and is actively involved in community life.

It wasn't all plain sailing for Nehemiah. He faced a lot of opposition and challenges, but I believe God will stay faithful to us and our church plant here in Helensburgh just as He stayed faithful to Israel and the walls were rebuilt.

I know some of you here today will be wondering what we are about, and I want to show from scripture how as a church we share in fellowship together.

In Acts 2 we see a description of the first church fellowship being set up, where we read in verse 42 "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers".

We see here 4 marks of the early church listed here

1 The apostle's doctrine

2 Fellowship (participation, sharing)

3 Breaking of Bread (Covers some aspects of the lord's supper and larger fellowship meal)

4 Prayer (in house meetings and at the Temple (church))

Steadfastly has the idea of giving 1. Continual attention to something.

2. Devoted to it...

The apostle's doctrine is simply those things taught to the apostles by Jesus before His ascension to Heaven. They are now written in Scripture for us to use as our guide for daily living.

So, what is Fellowship? In the book of Acts, we read about the first 'church plant' or fellowship. Shortly after Jesus was taken up to heaven Peter was preaching and the Holy Spirit came down among the people and 3000 were converted!

Sometimes when people think of having fellowship they think of coffee, cake and a good natter but fellowship is about more than coffee and cake ~ although that's good too and we will have both at the end of this meeting!

One of the things I love about getting deeper into the Bible is looking at the Greek words in the original text. I looked up this fellowship that we have here in Acts 2:42 and in the Greek its called Koinonia ( koy-nohn-ee-ah) and it actually means:-

Sharing

Unity

Close association

Partnership

Participation

Communion

These words give fellowship a stronger deeper meaning than just friendship, when Gods people met together the elements of Koinonia come in to play. In verses 45-46 of Acts 2 we see the believers selling and sharing material goods so that the needs of all the believers were met.

They were also partnering in the gospel of Jesus Christ sharing their trials and victories with one another, supporting one another and encouraging each other.

Unity in and through the Holy Spirit causes a common connection between believers and cements them to the Lord and to each other. We become a family of believers not bound together by blood but by our common faith in Jesus Christ as Saviour. That's why Christians' often refer to their fellow believers as 'brothers and sisters' in the Lord.

My hope is that here in Kirkmichael we'll have this kind of fellowship. I do pray with our outreach work through our Christianity Explored courses and meeting people that they will be convicted by their sin to come towards God in prayer because it is Him we have offended. Asking for repentance admitting that I have sinned against Him and being sorry for that and to turn and change direction from sin.

Then putting faith in Jesus as your only Saviour, not by merely thinking he is a historical figure, we are to call out to Him and ask him for salvation Rom 10:13 For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

Those without Christ will be eternally lost! The human race has no reason to feel proud. We should all feel ashamed of ourselves. Do you feel your sins? Do you realize you cannot save yourself? To such, Jesus spoke these words: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light".

So folk here those who come to Jesus in repentance and faith shall be safe for time and eternity.

If you want to talk about your salvation, please talk after this meeting...