

Until I Arose

01 - Nehemiah: A Time for Restoration
Church on the Park | Sunday, 20 September 2020

Text: חָדְלוּ פְּרָזוֹן בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל חָדְלוּ עַד שֶׁקָּמְתִי דְבוֹרָה שֶׁקָּמְתִי אִם בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל

“The peasantry ceased, they ceased in Israel, Until I, Deborah, arose, Until I arose, a mother in Israel” (Judges 5:7, NASB).

“Broken-down
Warriors in Israel,
Broken-down,
Until I arose,
Deborah,
I arose,
Mother in Israel”
(Judges 5:7, personal translation)

Theme: Good leaders are great servants.

Intro: In Deborah’s time, the situation in Israel was tragic. The people were oppressed by the Canaanites for twenty years. All the warriors were broken-down and the people lost their will to fight. Then a cry arose to God, a cry from the people for help. Yet, no man was willing to move.

So instead of a man, a woman arose: Deborah (*Devorah*). Deborah, a woman and mother, arose. And God saved the nation through a woman, not a man. Yes, he used men but a woman initiated the revolution and change.

Today, I want to talk to your about leadership: 1) What is a true leader in God’s eyes?, 2) What are the wrong conceptions we have of leadership?, and 3) What does good leadership do? I especially want to look at Nehemiah; I believe this is the book for this hour.

1) It’s time for God’s leaders to arise (Judges 5:7; Nehemiah 1:1-3).

- When we read **the book of Nehemiah** we see that **Jerusalem was restored** because **Nehemiah arose** (Nehemiah 1:1-11).
- **Before** Nehemiah arose the situation was **tragic** for Jerusalem.
 - We are **reminded** of the story of **Deborah** around 791 years before.
- At the start of Nehemiah, Nehemiah was in a **very comfortable place**.
 - He was **cupbearer** of the king.
 - This was an **honoured position**.
 - A cupbearer was an officer of **high rank and value**.
 - Cupbearers were **close** to the king.
 - Cupbearers often **advised** the king and were **administrators** for the king.
 - And yet, like Moses, he is **willing to leave his high place** to go **down** into the **brokenness** of his people.
 - This is a **foreshadowing** of our **Saviour Jesus**, who left the glory of heaven in order to enter into the brokenness of the world.
- When Nehemiah heard about the **brokenness** of the **walls and gates**—which was a **picture of the brokenness of the people**—he was **distressed**.
 - God had **disturbed** Nehemiah.
 - His **distress** led him to **intercede and pray**.
 - In other words, **Nehemiah had the same heart as God**.
 - When God’s people are hurting, God is hurting
 - When God’s people are broken, God’s leaders are broken too.
 - There’s only **one solution** and that is **God himself**.
 - Therefore, Nehemiah turned to God in fervent prayer and fasting.

- In Nehemiah we are seeing **the example of a true leader.**

2) God is calling all of us to be leaders in this time.

- The Lord is not just looking for a **select few**—he wants **all his people to rise up.**
- God will especially use the **women** in our day to raise up a standard.
 - If a woman could judge and lead all of Israel in **1235BC**, surely women can lead today.
 - Women can prophesy, pastor, preach and teach today.
 - The Gospel is all about the liberation of the male and female, the Jew and Gentile, the rich and the poor.
 - **The Good News liberates.**
 - For the theology of women in ministry please read and listen to **Dr. Craig Keener** (<https://craigkeener.com/women-in-ministry/>)
- This is a **day** and **hour like Nehemiah.**
 - The **walls and gates** of God's people have been **broken-down.**
 - Many people are **devastated, mentally plagued and cannot arise.**
 - *What are the signs that our walls have been broken-down?*
 - 1 - People easily given into temptation. There's no hatred for sin.
 - 2 - There is a lack of hope. Shame and despair fill people's hearts.
 - 3 - Instead of us prevailing against the gates of hell, the gates of hell prevail against us.
 - 4 - The people of God have lost their passion and fire.
 - 5 - Corporate prayer has fallen to pieces.
 - 6 - People are not committed to the house of God. They only come to church if its convenient.
 - 7 - Instead of God's people looking to the Word of God, they are looking to the world for help.
 - 8 - The world has invaded the church rather than the church invading the world.
 - 9 - Brothers, sisters and churches don't stick together and remain loyal to one another. Instead, we are like stones scattered on the floor, rather than upholding one another.
- All of these signs can be **depressing** and **disturbing.**
 - But **there is only one answer:** God's people **seeking his face** and **repenting** like Nehemiah.
 - But **change** begins with **one person**—one **pioneer**—**arising.**
 - **Arising** actually **first** looks like **falling on our faces.** That is, falling on our faces in prayer.
 - We **lead** by **servicing in prayer.**

3) Good leaders are great servants and true leaders lead by example.

- What most **people say/think** is a '**good leader**' is not a good leader in God's eyes.
 - We think of a **powerful person who commands** others as a leader.
 - This is not how God sees leaders.
 - We think if someone is a **good manager**, they're a leader. Often we think of a leader as someone who has a **high position**—this is not a leader either.
- **A true leader is a servant.**
 - **Jesus on leadership:** Matthew 20:25-28
- A true leader leads by **example.**
 - 1 Timothy 4:12
 - 1 Peter 5:1-5
 - Hebrews 13:7

4) A leader arises in crisis—they don't follow the crowd, they follow Jesus.

- **True leadership starts** with **following**—**following Jesus** rather than following the **crowd.**
- You are **not waiting for people to follow.**
 - Instead, you **wait for God alone.**
 - You **follow God's leading.**
 - And those who want to follow God will follow with you.
- A leader does not have to be a man. It can be a **woman** too. It's anyone who leads the way through **servanthood and example.**
 - A leader is **not** a **boss.** Instead, they are the **chief servant.**
 - A leader is **not** someone with a **strong domineering personality.**

- Instead, it's someone who is **gentle, carries their cross** and **gives space** to others.
- A **leader** is someone who **when you imitate their life**, you get **closer to God and reflect Jesus more**.
 - Anything else is **false leadership**.
- God has called **Anna and I** to train up leaders for this generation.
 - Not merely leaders for the church, but leaders for the generation.
 - We see all of you called to be leaders.
- Leadership is **not dictating, it's demonstrating**. It's not **demanding**; it's being a **disciple** of Jesus.

5) Jesus led the way by example.

- Jesus led the way by example and **he arose** from the dead so that we could **arise**.
 - He **entered** into the **brokenness** of the world.
 - He **carried the cross** that was **meant for us**.
 - He **wept** before the Father and interceded for us.
 - He went all the way to the cross and **restore us**.
 - He **arose from the dead** so that you could arise **and** follow in his footsteps.
- He is calling you to be a leader and restorer like **Nehemiah and Deborah**.

Conclusion: Good leaders focus more on following Jesus than influencing others. By following Jesus, they become an example to others. Ask yourself this week: *is my life leaving a good example for the children and new believers to follow? If everyone was like me, would the church be stronger or weaker?*