

God's Blueprint for Revival

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[0:00] We're going to look further into the book of Nehemiah.

We touched on it this morning. This is really part two of the morning's message. So we see through the first chapters in Nehemiah how Nehemiah had some important godly leadership lessons through the first part of the book.

And we see how he trains us and teaches us how we can be builders for God. How we can build a life for God and build up ourselves in the kingdom of God.

And there's more lessons about leadership in the last part of the book. But in particular the last chapters of the book speak about revival. It tells of revival. How God brings revival.

In chapters 8 through 10 especially we see a revival in Jerusalem. It's the last great revival of the Old Testament. A Bible revival.

[1:08] And in the book of Nehemiah we see signs of revival. And we see a blueprint for revival. This message is a blueprint for revival. God's blueprint.

And through the book of Nehemiah we see numbers of themes, various signs of God at work amongst his own people. We see God's power and truth. We see God's people's joy and fellowship and separation.

We'll just touch on some of these themes as we go through. God's blueprint for revival. We see God working here through the record of Nehemiah.

God at work in genuine revival power. We know in the world we live there's a lot of talk about revival and claimed revival. But we want to make sure that the revival that we have is biblical.

It's Bible revival. It's a restoration of Bible truth in genuine revival power. And at this time in the book as we come to chapter 7.

[2:12] The walls of Jerusalem were restored. And the people were dwelling safely and in security in Jerusalem again. So Nehemiah had accomplished that.

It took him just 52 days. 52 days. A task that for others they had failed to do in over a century. But it took Nehemiah just 52 days as the people were harnessed together and accomplished that work. And then we come to Nehemiah chapter 7. And we see here in Nehemiah chapter 7 that Nehemiah organized the city.

He used another leadership principle of delegation. As he appointed men, as he would take some other journey, he wanted to leave behind the city in the safe hands of faithful men.

So he looked for those character traits of those qualities of faithfulness and of the fear of God.

Those men who could take charge. And it's probable then at this time that Nehemiah returned to the Persian court to resume his duties there.

[3:22] And in chapter 7 verse 2 Nehemiah writes, I gave my brother Hanani and Hananiah the ruler of the palace charge over Jerusalem. For he was a faithful man and feared God above many.

He used that principle of delegation. He chose faithful men who feared God. Delegation is an important leadership principle.

So at this time the book kind of takes a different slant. There's a different flavour to the book of Nehemiah from this point. It's like Nehemiah passes the baton on to Ezra.

He steps out of the limelight as it were. And Ezra steps into Nehemiah's shoes. So God had used Nehemiah to reconstruct the walls. And now he would use Ezra to re-instruct the people.

From here on we see in the book of Nehemiah Ezra takes the lead in terms of the revival and the reformation work. Ezra was a preacher of the word.

[4:28] Many believe in fact that Ezra could possibly have been the author of Psalm 119. It is the longest chapter in your Bible. A beautiful psalm

that would pay to read for homework.

Psalms 119. A beautiful psalm about the word of God. And Ezra the revivalist and reformer loved the word of God. And he appeared in chapter 8.

We see here that God brings revival to the nation. From chapter 8 we see revival. What is revival? It's a bringing back into life. It's really a moving of God's spirit.

A bringing back of spiritual life. And it's evident as we see through the next verses. We see some of those signs of what revival is.

The features of revival. We see real repentance. We see a reading of God's word. We see a reverence. A true reverence for the things of God.

[5:28] And an obedience to it. So chapter 8 of Nehemiah tells of the people responding to the word of God. There was an understanding of God's word. A rejoicing in God's word.

And an obedience to God's word. These were all signs of that spiritual revival. That deep down heart work that God was effecting. As the people hungered and thirsted for the word of God.

And there was a unity amongst the people. Chapter 8 verse 1. We read that the people gathered together. As one man. In the stream. That was before the water gate.

And it's interesting. The Bible tells us. Of the Bible. That there is a washing of the word. There's a cleansing action. There's a cleansing work that comes. As the word does its work.

And so the people gathered. In an appropriate place. At the water gate. At that place where there would have been water flowing. No doubt. In that location.

[6:26] And it speaks to us. Of the cleansing power. Of God's word. And it goes on. Verse 1 of chapter 8. And they spoke to. Ezra the scribe. To bring the book. Bring the book.

Of the law of Moses. Which the Lord had commanded to Israel. Bring the book. Was their crying. They wanted the book. They wanted Ezra to bring the book. The people's one purpose.

Was to cry out. For the book. To cry out. For the word of God. Bring the book. Bring the book. They said. This is really. The beginning of revival. When there's a longing.

A hungering. A wanting. The word of God. We can't get enough. Of the word of God. We want to. Be where this fellowship. To be where this teaching. To be where we can study.

And receive. And hear the word of God. And learn it. This is revival. They had been in captivity. For some 70 years. And they were thirsty.

[7:22] For the reading. And exposition. Of the word. It goes on. Verse 2. Of chapter 8. And Ezra. The priest. Brought the Lord. Before the congregation. Both men.

And women. And all that could hear. With understanding. Upon the first day. Of the seventh month. No one was excluded. Anyone who could hear. With understanding. Was welcomed here.

To hear the word. As it was delivered. And they worshipped the Lord together. As they heard the word. There was a faithfulness there. They did not treat. The word of God lightly. The things of God. Carelessly.

We likewise. But seek after God. With that whole heart. With that earnest. And serious desire. And that longing. For truth. To seek God. To seek him.

For as long as it takes. As much as we can. And the people. The families. Brought their children. To hear the word of God. We thank God. There's young children here today.

[8:18] There's young people here today. There's no age limit. To hear the things of God. They brought their children. Who are old enough. To help. Understand. God's word.

And they read from the books. Of the law. This would have been. The first few books of the Bible. Genesis. Exodus. Leviticus. Numbers. Deuteronomy.

Verse 3 of chapter 8. Ezra read therein. Before the stream. That was before the water gate. From the morning. Until midday. Apparently this word morning. It means like daybreak.

As soon as the sun was up. As soon as the light. Was shining. The people were there. Down at the place. Where the word was. The features of Bible revival. Is that there will be.

A love. Of Bible preaching. This is very important. In these days. In which we live. Brothers and sisters. It's vital. And critical. In these days. In which we live.

[9:14] Where I believe. As the word tells us. There will be. There is a famine. Of hearing. The words. Of the Lord. Amos 8. Verse 11. And the people heard the word.

From first light. From daybreak. And it says. It goes on. Ezra read the word. Before the men. And the women. And those that could understand. Their approach was. That anyone. Everyone. And everyone. Who could hear. And understand. The word of God. Needed. To hear it. And it says. The ears. Of all the people. Were attentive. Unto. The book. Of the law. Hearing. Not just preaching. But hearing. Is a feature. Of biblical revival. As we know. The word says. Hear that have an ear.

To hear. Let him hear. What the spirit. Says to the churches. We need to hear. The word of God. The word was read. And taught. And most importantly. It was heard. Faith cometh by hearing.

[10:10] And hearing by. The word of God. We need to be. Where we can hear. The word of God. And it can penetrate. Into our ear. Again. And do a work. Within our heart. And that's.

Five of chapter. Right. The word. The book. In the sight. Of all the people. For he was above. All the people. And when he had opened it. All the people. Stood up.

Hallelujah. Yeah. I know. My dad likes to talk. Of. A time. He was in Africa. And he delivered. A message. And as he went. To read.

The word of God. The people stood up. Upon their feet. And. It was an honor. It was a respect. A judge walks into the room. Or. The mayor walks into the room. In a council meeting.

Or. Some head of state. Walks into an assembly place. The people stand. Out of respect. For the authority. Of the person. Of the office. And likewise too. We should respect.

[11:05] This authority. Amen. The authority. The final authority. God's word. And so. When Ezra opened the book. The people stood. They honored the word of God.

They paid respect unto it. This is still the same. In some cultures today. And it's a good practice. We don't make. A tradition of it. So. So much. But it is a good practice. Sometimes.

We will ask people to stand. As we read God's word. Because in the west. We become careless. And regardless. And neglectful. There's a careless disregard. For the things of God. For the word of God.

As a culture. Aussies are slag. As I. And I count myself an Aussie. Although I'm a. A ring in from. A plummy land. A plummy land. I. I think that Aussies are slag.

Brothers and sisters. I must say. That. And not bear with me. If I'm offending you. If you're an Aussie today. But Aussies could do better. In regards to the things of God. So that love.

[12:00] Of the things of God. That respect. Of the word of God. What did the people do? It says the people. Stood for hours. As they listened. For five or six hours. At a time. Now. I'm not asking you to stand.

But. We've got about four hours left. No. I'm not meaning that tonight. But you know. We take it so lightly. Don't we? If we go too long. Oh. You're watching your clock. Or you're watching your wristwatch.

Or you're thinking about. The meal that you get to go home and eat. Whatever it be. We can get so time bound. Can't we? That we don't think. To spend time. With the word of God. They didn't mind the time. That they took. And the word had an effect.

What happened when they had the word. The word led them. To worship. In chapter eight. Verse three. They bowed their heads. And they worshiped the Lord. That was a wonderful time of worship. Ezra blessed the Lord. The great God. And all the people answered.

Amen. Amen. With lifting up their heads. They worshiped the Lord. That was a wonderful time of worship. Ezra blessed the Lord. The great God. And all the people answered. Amen.

[12:55] Amen. lifting up their hands and they bowed their heads and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground the word led them to worship there's a reverence to the word of God a respect to the word of God and as we love and revere and honor and believe the word of God it leads us into right worship into passionate worship as Ezra read God's word and explained the meaning chapter 8 verse 8 Ezra read in the book of the law of God distinctly and he gave the sense and he caused them to

understand the reading when God's people get together when we gather together as God's children there's a wonderful joy that comes from the word of God there's a wonderful purpose as we gather it's not to provide you with humor or entertainment but of understanding of the word of God that's our focus that's our mission that's our motive that there's an understanding that's communicated of the word of

God and so it says they worshiped and they wept for joy why because of the word the word was so precious to them that they worshiped and they wept when they heard it and friends God can turn for you for me tears tears of sorrow into shouts of joy that's what happened for these people as God did an inside work there was that joy that came and we see that there was a convicting work going on in chapter 8 verse 9 they taught the people this day is holy unto the Lord your God more not nor we for all the people wept when they heard the words of the law you know it's touching when you see people who are moved upon by God you know sometimes it's a blessing when we delivered a message or we've had a time of worship to see people moved upon by God you know but it's not all about the emotionalism but it can happen and it's a beautiful thing when God moves upon us in such a way and the people were moved upon in conviction as they heard the word they wept they were shedding of tears at the water gate as the water of the word did its cleansing washing work there was that weeping of eyes weeping and of a conviction of sin and we see that through the great historic revivals of old there was a characteristic deep conviction of sin that God wrought within the people as they gathered and it says for the by the law is the knowledge of sin now they had the knowledge of sin they saw how far short they fell as the word was preached and they saw their lag there was a holy conviction that took a hold of them and that swept through the place this was the working of the holy spirit because the people came under the authority of the word what of today where are the people today who'll have that love of the word of God will have that reverence of the authority of the word of God they'll take it seriously and wait before a holy God before his holy word we don't see that too often sadly do we let's be honest today why did revival come there was a godly unity they gathered as one man at the water gate and they heard the word there was a desire for God's truth as they gathered the word of

God was delivered it was read and explained it was heard it wasn't just a bunch of stories or experiences you know you can go to some places and and hear some stories about supposed trips to heaven or visions of this and visions of that and yet not a lot of this friends we need the word of God that's what we need the word of God read explained and then we see that the moving of the spirit as people's sinfulness was exposed as God's holiness was brought to light and the people acted upon what they heard and so further more the preacher exhorted the people in 8 verse 10 the joy of the lord is your strength he saw the convicting power of the holy spirit as the people were broken up over their sin as he saw the repenting hearts and God lifted the burden of sin he hears our cry he brings joy joy unspeakable and full of glory he brings deep heart joy into life still by his spirit today by that same gospel that he gave back then that joy that joy that is beyond compare a joy that's based on faith that's based on the conviction of sin and a forgiveness of sin of joy from God's truth that's what we need brothers and sisters that's revival when the word works and it penetrates hearts and it stirs lives it stirs us to conviction it stirs us and true and verse 12 it says the people rejoiced they understood the word and they rejoiced in its declaration they understood the word it brought weeping it brought joy it brought holiness it brought gladness and it brought fellowship so the word the word is fundamental and foundational it's central to the working of god's spirit at the center of revival is the word of god it says then that the leaders of the people gathered especially together to grasp the word of god together in chapter 8 verse 13 the people of god the leaders of the people gathered together they specially gathered together the leaders of the people in chapter 8 verse 13 how we need leaders who care about the word of god who want to get together and stir one one another up and sharpen one another up with the word of god how we need a government that cares about the things of god and the truth of god's teaching we need to pray for our leaders pray for our government and for our nation a strong sign of revival is an emphasis on god's word on biblical preaching and the proclamation of the bible must be central there was a well-known bible teacher jay vernon mcgee who said i don't care how loud the soloist sings or how sweetly the organist plays or how flowery the message if the bible is not read distinctly and the sense of it is not given so that the people can understand the services of no avail whatsoever god wants understanding to come from the reading of his word now we can put on the

the ritziest performance as far as our music and as far as some scholarly discourse from me but if we're not getting the bible preached and made understandable and received it's in vain the word must work and the word brought conviction it moved the people to action they restored the feast they restored the things they neglected in chapter 8 17 it says in part there was very great gladness there was great joy in that city because of the word it was spontaneous and it was sweet what about us do we care about the importance of god's word it's what saves us makes us clean edifies us leads us brings victory we should study it love it live it dr martin lloyd jones said that genuine revival is always marked by a return to biblical teaching and preaching right through the book we see that god's people responded to the word the word was right there front and center through the book of nehemiah and especially as we see the revival time in the book of nehemiah they wanted the word they honored the word they listened to the word they understood it they were convicted by it and they rejoiced in it there was a reverence for the word of god and it led to a reverence in their assembling together in nehemiah 8 verse 18 it speaks of a solemn assembly so a holy gathering a solemn assembly it's an interesting word would pay to perhaps check your concordance on this phrase solemn assembly there's a numbers of times through scripture that it tells us of this dedicated time of a an assembly that is someone that is serious about the things of god in joel chapter 1 joel says sanctify ye a fast call a solemn assembly gather the people cry unto god moving on to chapter 9 it says in this chapter we see repentance and true worship it had been for 24 consecutive days the people had worshipped you know you think once a week is hard enough 24 consecutive days they had the word of god they worshiped the lord 24 consecutive days day after day 24 times they worshiped the lord and they heard his word there was a faithfulness there that took something in terms of commitment didn't it they did not treat the things of god carelessly and likewise too we should take as long as it takes to get a hold of god take as long as it takes to grab a hold of god we notice here that the people were fasting in chapter 9. it's very evident as the people gathered they did something looked a bit kind of unusual i could i could say for our time for someone to take off their normal clothes and put on sackcloth so they actually put on the same cloth that their potatoes were carried in or whatever it being they were carrying sacks of things and they made clothing out of this sackcloth and then they threw dirt and ashes upon their heads and covered themselves in this way that they looked quite undone and it reflected the humility of their inner hearts that was the point of this humbling work of clothing themselves with sackcloth and of fasting and such like they were separating themselves from the world in verse 2. so here they are just get a load of this now here they were having a three hour bible study time and then three hours of praising the lord and then a time of confessing their sins of repentance chapter 9 verse 1 it says they were fasting with sackcloth and earth upon them revival came as they humbled themselves they read the word they heard the word they fasted they showed that in a hard attitude of humility by their outward clothing and they joined in worship and repentance they wept over their sin verse 2 there was a brokenness over their sin what about us today in this fine aussie culture that we live in in our church life in our christian walk today do we take sin seriously is there a brokenness over our sin or do we treat it lightly and carelessly the people here they were broken up over their sin they wanted to get right with god they wanted god to deal with the very core of their being and make them saved and holy and repentance then led to rejoicing as they saw as they repented as they sought god god god heard them and chapter 9 verse 5 they cried out with a loud voice and gave praise as ezra led them stand up and bless the lord your god forever and ever and blessed be thy glorious name which is exalted above all blessing and praise and he goes on with much prayer uh exalting god verse 6 of chapter 9 of nehemiah thou even thou art lord alone thou hast made the heaven the heaven of heavens with all their host the earth and all things that are therein the seas and all that is therein and thou preservest them all and the host of heaven worshipeth thee verse 17 in part it says thou art a god ready to pardon gracious and merciful slow to anger and of great kindness and forsook them not there was much praise to god that flowed on as their hearts were clean as their conviction led to that converting work of the spirit of god and in the closing chapters of the book we see the people had their lives cleaning up as there was an establishing of leaders and we don't have time to touch on all the various themes here but just in brief there was a further establishment of god's work and in chapter 12 there was thanksgiving and praise in chapter 12 43 it says god had made them rejoice with great joy so much so that the joy of jerusalem was heard even afar off verse 46 of chapter 12 it says songs of praise and thanksgiving and thanksgiving were given unto god so the people had a wonderful restoration of that which they had lacked as they renewed their commitment as they turned from their backsliding and that

spiritual decay and then in chapter 13 as we get to the last chapter of the book the people took their separation seriously in chapter 13 verse 3 it says in part that they separated themselves from the mixed multitude there was a separation there had been this kind of mixing together this mishmash this kind of blending together of false and true as they mingled with the pagan culture of their time and there was a calling for a separation a sanctifying work and likewise to god's calling out of people for his name god's calling out of separated people a peculiar particular treasure for himself he's calling unto us to be separated from sin and from the world separated from the world we're called to be not of this world but of the world to come to be that chosen people that generation that are his to be those indwelt by him and his spirit to be his very own to be for his pleasure and his praise and we are to love not the world the world friends think of that today just as we are coming to a closing time here think of your situation here today how do you stand with god are you right with god i know years back in in moontah there's a church and it says on the the front of the pulpit it says as the slogan get right with god now that's a good slogan for a church to have that's a good slogan to have in front of a pulpit in front of a preacher as you hear the word of god get right with god friends it's up to you each one of you here today to answer that question am i right with god am i like those who took the word of god seriously

[28:42] they revered it and honored it and they heard it that was a convicting work there's a conviction there's a weeping over their sin and there was a working of god's spirit within as they sought after god what of you tonight what of you you can only answer that for yourself sadly in jerusalem they slip slid away again as we see it was 12 years that nehemiah had been away and he came back to jerusalem and he was shocked by what he saw because there was a decline again he was shocked by what he saw there was a corrupt priesthood that had caused a dreadful spiritual decline he took leadership again and when he got there this is uh through chapter 13 he saw that they even had tobias accommodated within the temple he was this arch enemy that he had right through the earlier chapters this man had withstood him and conspired against him and undermined him at every turn they had tobias uh as a resident living in some part of the temple this uh heathen man and nehemiah threw him out in verses 7 and 8 of chapter 13 it was a like to the lord throwing the money changers out of the temple there would be no compromise here nehemiah rebuked the spiritual leaders and got them back on track again chapter 13 verse 11 he contended with them he said why is the house of god forsaken nehemiah took drastic action we need that today brothers sisters in christendom today and churchianity today why is the house of god forsaken the things of god are forsaken there's a laxness there's a spiritual vacuum there's a spiritual poverty in god's people and we need to seek after god again we need to take god seriously we need to have a solemn assembly if you like we need a spiritual cleansing we need a vigilance over the things of god over the house of god the worship had been forsaken the word had been forsaken they brought it back and then they slacked off again and nehemiah called the people to get back to god to get right with god that was his message there was a restoration again as he brought review there was a restoration of their giving of their regular practice of worship as there was a sanctifying again of their ministry there was a rebuking of the unholy alliances and a reinstating of godliness as far as their marriages and that restoration of their relationship with god what does nehemiah mean for us today how do we wrap all this up nehemiah's goal was the restoration of spiritual truth of the persons of the people's relationship with god in verse 13 of chapter 13 he appointed faithful men men with god-given convictions and commitment who would not compromise we need that today brothers and sisters we need godly men and i believe we have such in this church today godly men who will take leadership who'll have faithfulness who'll have integrity and will have conviction biblical conviction we need that today we need to get back to the bible today to have that refreshing a spiritual life we

see through nehemiah's book prayer was there right through the pages right from chapter one right through nehemiah prayed when he faced hardship heartache mockery strife when he was opposed what did he do he prayed we need to pray church we need to pray pray keep on praying a man andrew bonar said this of revival revivals begin with god's people the holy spirit touches their heart anew

and gives them new fervor and compassion and zeal new light and life and when he has thus come to you he next goes forth to the valley of dry bones oh what responsibility this lays on the church of god if you grieve him away from yourselves or hinder his visit then the poor perishing world suffers sorely no judgment begins at the house of god we need to get our house in order as it were the church of god we need to get re-bibled if you like there was a story of a man in india and perhaps his commander of the english language wasn't quite uh as it could have been and he wrote back to um another preacher about god's moving amongst the people of india at that time and he wrote this he said about this great revival we are having a great re bible here hallelujah we're having a great re bible here you know he might have got the spelling wrong or the understanding wrong but it was true that's what we need people isn't it we need a re bible to get re-bibled again and we need this urging this prompting this searching this hungering and thirsting for the word of god will we have a famine of the words of the lord as amos predicted as he prophesied or where we have a revival of the word that's what we need that's what you need that's what i need be stirred be encouraged be exhorted today to find more time for god's word find more time for it make more time for it jeremiah said thy words were found and i did eat them and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart the joy and rejoicing of my heart this is god's love letter to you this is his message of love written for you for me let's take it seriously the law of the lord is perfect converting the soul the testimony of the lord is sure making wise the simple have a read of psalm 19 and psalm 119 beautiful psalms that stir us to a greater love and appreciation for the word so where the word was there was repentance where the word was there was rejoicing and there can be on 2014 today there can be such today let me close by quoting a revivalist r.a tory about revival get right with god pray put yourself at god's disposal he puts it like this he says i can give you a prescription that will bring revival revival to any church or community or city on earth first let a few christians get thoroughly right with god if this is not done the rest will come to nothing so first get right with god second let them bind themselves together to pray for revival until god opens the windows of heaven and comes down pray and thirdly let them put themselves at the disposal of god for his use as he sees fit in winning others to christ that is all i have given you this prescription around the world and in no instance has it failed it cannot fail get right with god get together and pray and put yourself at god's disposal i urge you now to make a personal decision i don't want this to be just some theoretical lecture about revival but about you about me about a personal application what can i do how can i put this in my kit bag and take it home with me and apply this stream the next 24 by 7 and beyond how can i make

this live in my life friends i urge you you may ask what can i do you might say oh look he's talking to someone else today the preacher must be talking to the guy or girl next to me he's not talking to me today but the question is what can i do and it's your question to answer moody wrote these words he said i am only one but i am one i cannot do everything but i can do something and that which i can do by the grace of god i will do every one of us has a different skill set a different opportunity to serve i urge you you might think i'm just one well you're the one that god's speaking to now you're the one he's calling to do something by his grace for his glory we've heard about nehemiah we've seen his life's work he built the wall when it was an impossible task he appointed ezra as the preacher of the word there was a love for the word as they gathered as one man as they came to the water gate there was the washing of the word there there was a convicting power as they wet rivers of tears and when the word was preached when there was a convicting of sin heart deep and there was a converting power and there was a wonderful joy as the word was received as there was repentance so there was rejoicing and it can be true today here and now in our place in our town in our community in our lives in your family in your homes you are just one but god is speaking to you let us pray