

Nehemiah - Revival

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[0 : 0 0] to hear the prayer of your servant which I now pray before you day and night for the people of Israel your servants confessing the sins of the people of Israel which we have sinned against you yes I and my father's house have sinned we have acted very corruptly against you and have not kept the commandments the statutes and the ordinances which you did command your servant Moses remember the word which you did command your servant Moses saying if you are unfaithful I will scatter you among the peoples but if you return to me and keep my commandments and do them though you are dispersed under the farthest skies I will gather them thence and bring them to the place which I have chosen to make my name dwell there they are your servants and your people whom you have redeemed by your great power and in your strong hand Lord let your ear be attentive to the prayer of your servant and to the prayer of your servants who delight to fear your name give success to your servant today and grant him mercy in the sight of this man now I was cupbearer to the king amen may God bless that reading we'll continue in praise we'll stand and sing once again was in the isle of Lewis 1949 to 1950 and the individual who was greatly used of God in that revival was a man called Duncan Campbell and he comes in his biography he comes with a quotation now to let you understand in his early days Duncan Campbell had been in the faith mission but at the time of this particular quotation he was actually a minister of the United Free Church and according to his own confession was backslidden and so he tells a story one day while they're having breakfast his little daughter six or seven came to the table and asked these questions which only children can ask daddy when you were in the faith mission you saw revival how is it you're not seeing it now and in his biography he says the word of a child went right through me we'll return to that at the end of this for now we're looking at the book of Nehemiah it happened in Chisleigh in the 20th year as I was in Susa the capital the capital of Persia as it was known then that Hanani one of my brethren came with certain men out of Judah and I asked them concerning the Jews that survived who'd escaped exile and concerning Jerusalem now in the book of Nehemiah we're on to the last stages recorded stages of the history of Israel and Judah an event had taken place which Jeremiah had warned them of and that was the exile Jeremiah said the whole land shall become a ruin and a waste and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon 70 years

and if you want to get an idea what the exile was like read psalm 137 by the rivers of babylon there we sat down and wept when our captors demanded songs of us saying sing to us of the songs of zion but god had said other things he said in isaiah i am the lord who made all things who says of jerusalem she shall be inhabited and of the cities of judah they shall be built so it was in 536 bc that the people of israel returned to their own land where we are now is a lot further on than that somewhere about bc 445 nehemiah is contemporary with the last of the prophets malachi and if you read the very end of the book some of the concerns that malachi raises are indeed the concerns of nehemiah so since nehemiah is all about the building of the wall and city of jerusalem it has the same theme not just of reviving the wall but of reviving god's work and god knows we need a revival revivals can't be worked up but they can be prepared for and that's what i'm seeking to do first of all this report i was in susa the capital and the jews who survived and escaped exile and concerning jerusalem and what they tell him is something absolutely devastating but mark this from these open verses we learn very little about nehemiah we don't know when he was born we don't know how long he lived save for the remark he was the son of hekeliash and it is john wesley once said that god buries his workmen but carries on his work so what this has to tell us is that who the workmen are are totally unimportant what is important is the work of god i asked them concerning the jews who had survived etc and they say this the survivors there in the promise in the province who escaped exile are in great trouble and shame the wall of jerusalem is broken down and its gates are destroyed by fire so this is a shattering situation now how about today if we were to look round on the church of god in this country how could we estimate what it's doing or failing to do we might take the line that they are failing in the task of preaching the gospel we could equally take the line that they are failing in dealing with the biblical witness as they should what should we do the state of jerusalem is to be like this i am the lord who made all things who says of jerusalem she shall be inhabited now given that that's to be the case and it's to be the case for a very specific reason which we find

in isaiah chapter 2 which i'll read to you and it's this it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the lord shall be established as the highest of the mountains many people shall come and say let us go to the house of the lord that he may teach us his ways and we may walk in his paths for out of zion shall go forth the law and the word of the lord from jerusalem that is where nehemiah wants to take them the restoration of jerusalem as a center of worship the place where god's word is to be proclaimed and that nations will gather and honor what god is saying but it needs god to do something to take away the shame of judgment earlier in the book of ezra round about chapters 4 and 5 you can read that the adversaries of judah which we'll consider next time in nehemiah chapter 4 had brought the work of god to a stop and there are forces abroad today in 2019 that would like the cause of god's work to cease but we have to realize that we're in the act of seeking god that he might revive his work so how does nehemiah react he prays listen to his repentance when i heard these words i sat down and wept and i mourned for days and i continued fasting and praying before the god of heaven so nehemiah we learn is indeed a man of prayer and his reaction is contained in four statements he wept he mourned he fasted he prayed all of these are four stages in dealing with repentance he wept this led to mourning which led to fasting which led to prayer but here's a thing when nehemiah prays and confesses as he says in the book yes i and my father's house have sinned in other words he's confessing sins that he did not commit why is he doing that nehemiah was a faithful servant of god who through whom jerusalem was restored and brought back to the place it should be yet he says i and my father's house have sinned it's not he that's allowed jerusalem to go into ruins but he is repenting of it there's a sense of solidarity which he is expressing with his people and that sense of solidarity is still there in the jewish race today but if it's there

in the jewish race ought it not to be here among christian people but the apostle writing in first corinthians tells us that if one man suffers we all suffer if another person rejoices we all rejoice so we have to have this sense of solidarity and what we are required to do based on this text is to confess the fact that the church of god per se has failed this is the way forward this is what he has to say now if we are like nehemiah how are we to act in this way he weeps he mourns that is he observes mourning rites he fasts he prays this fasting involved abstinence from food and the idea in the prophets of old is that by performing it you were afflicting your own soul as a sense of repentance before god and all of these measures are shown are taken to show the sincerity of nehemiah before god according to the text this morning lasted for some days this is not a flash in the pan experience this is something that we can surely learn from if we take seriously the plight of the church of god in this land in 2019 the apostle says this pray at all times in the spirits with all prayer and supplication this is the secret to wait on god in such a way that he speaks to you and through speaking to you we get into a place where our hearts are changed and we are ready for a mighty move of the spirit of god that's what i'm talking about the prayer oh lord god of heaven the great and terrible god who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments it has four bits this prayer it has an address it has a confession it has a reason and it has a plea now one of the things you learn as you read this chapter is in verses 8 to 10 the basis of the prayer is that nehemiah is quoting scripture remember the word which you did command your servant moises if you are unfaithful i will scatter you among the peoples that's a direct quote from leuiticus 26 33 then in verses 9 and 10 but if you return to me and keep my commandments and do them though you're dispersed beyond the further skies i will gather them thence and bring them to the place which i have chosen to make my name dwell there that's a quote from deuteronomy chapter 30 verses 2 to 4 so what's he doing here what's he saying on this for what he's doing is reminding god in his prayer this is what you promised you said

that you would do this and i want you to do it bring back jerusalem to the place it should be think of the address oh lord god of heaven the great and terrible god who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keeps his commandment so what's he saying it's a description of god he is the great and awe inspiring god he acts he keeps covenant and steadfast love or mercy or grace but what's what is required is obedience with those who love him and keep his commandments so the god that he is describing in this prayer is the great and terrible god there's no limit to the ability that this god has this great and awe inspiring god in matthew 17 the apostles say to jesus increase our faith and he says to him to them if you had the faith of a mustard seed now the mustard seed is the smallest of all seeds that you find in the lands of the bible so if you had faith like a mustard seed you would say to this mulberry tree be uprooted and planted in the sea and it will obey you now let's take that statement be uprooted and planted in the sea how difficult is it for anyone to plant a tree in the sea it's virtually impossible but what our lord is saying is if you had faith like this you can do anything with god it all depends on our vision then we come back to this confession confessing the sins of the people of israel which we have sinned against you yes i and my father's house have sinned the hebrew verb which means to sin means literally to miss the mark to miss the goal and the goal is our righteous life with god which we by ourselves cannot keep we have acted very corruptly against you and have not kept your commandments so what has happened we have offended god that is what has happened in the original creation there was man and woman created in the image of god but we fallen short of that glory that original creation and that is what he's confessing we have offended god then the cause of the prayer remember the word which you did command your servant saying if you are unfaithful i will scatter you among all nations in other words this is again what i've already said nehemiah reminding god of what

[20 : 04] he said he would do so here we come to the last bit the plea let your ear be attentive to the prayer of your servant and to the prayer of your servants who delight to fear your name and give success to your servant today and grant him mercy in the sight of this man this idea of success is detailed by a Hebrew verb which means prosperity now we know the word shalom meaning peace but shalom has a great wide meaning other than peace it can mean wholeness it can mean healing it can mean spiritual prosperity that's what he's asking for please

God let's have spiritual prosperity and the final verse is this I was cupbearer to the king cupbearer to the king was a very important office in ancient Israel and in this case in Persia the person who occupied the office was usually a eunuch that is that he had prevented himself having any family and his actual job was to taste the wine that the king was being given to make sure it wasn't poisoned at the same time the king would often talk to the cupbearer about issues of government issues of policy authority so it's in our words it's an office that gives him access to the highest natural authority what about us we've got access to the

Lord God Almighty the king of kings the God who can do anything let me return to the subject of the Lewis revival how did this come about well Duncan Campbell's biography makes clear that it came about through the prayers of two elderly women one of whom was nearly blind and they were concerned that there were no young people in the church and so they set themselves to the task of meeting every so often to pray and as they prayed one of them got a vision of the church at a place in Lewis called Barbus Barbus is a

Gaelic speaking area and the people who were doing the praying were free church sand singers Gaelic speaking but this vision of the church that this lady got was of a church filled with young people saving God and so they continued to pray there's no limit on what God can do if we pray you don't have to be the minister you might not want to be the treasurer I can assure you you don't but you can pray and God can do great things amen send and sing once again glorious things of via spoken

Zion city of our God