

Chosen Vessel - What Is Revival?

by Chuck Smith

True revival is a lasting and deep work of God in the hearts of His people, characterized by a strong leadership, tithing, and a commitment to following God's Word and will.

Duration: 48:48

Scripture: Genesis 9:12-13, Exodus 32:1, Nehemiah 13:1-30, John 15:16

Topics: "Leadership"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of strong leadership in the church. He refers to the story of Nehemiah, who was appointed as the governor to oversee the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem. Despite the initial success and rejoicing, the people quickly fell back into sin and disobedience. The speaker highlights the need for leaders to remain present and engaged with their flock, as neglecting their responsibilities can lead to spiritual decline. He also mentions the example of Dave Wilkerson, who was called to minister to gangs in New York City and saw great success through his strong leadership.

Transcript

When Nehemiah heard of the condition that existed in Jerusalem from those who had come back to Persia, he was very grieved when he heard how demoralized the people were. The wall was broken down. The enemies were attacking them.

People were greatly discouraged. And so, Nehemiah prayed. He fasted.

He mourned. As he was bearing the cup to the king, the king observed that there was something wrong. And so, he questioned Nehemiah.

And Nehemiah was sort of shook that the king would observe his countenance, that it wasn't bright and happy. And he said, how can I be happy when the city of my people is in ruins? The walls are destroyed. And the king asked him what his desire was.

And Nehemiah said, well, I'd love to go back and lead the people in the rebuilding of the wall. The king said, how long will you be gone? And so, he gave him an estimate of time that he felt it would take to get things sort of restored, perhaps 12 years. And so, the king gave him the papers, appointed him the governor over the land, and sent him back that he might oversee the job of the rebuilding of the walls, which went rather fast.

But then, he remained there for a period of time to sort of establish the leadership among the people and really get them established. Now, we read that when they rebuilt the walls, it was a time of great rejoicing. It was a time of spiritual uplifting.

In the last few lessons we've had in Nehemiah, we've seen the revival. We have seen this excitement among the people as God has been working. And there was great rejoicing.

The people got into the word of God again. And in the word, they saw so many things that there was first conviction. As they were reading the word, the people began to weep before the Lord with a consciousness of their sin.

And then, the priest said, don't weep. This is a day unto the Lord. It should be a day of rejoicing.

And the people made the renewal of their commitment to God. Now, because he had appointed to the king just a specified period of time, evidently the king liked Nehemiah very much. And Nehemiah felt honor-bound to return to Persia, and no doubt was reporting to Artaxerxes the success of the mission and all.

But yet, having been to Jerusalem, his heart was in Jerusalem. And so, he remained with the king for certain days. But no doubt, he requested to just be able to go back and just to remain in Jerusalem.

His heart was now there. When he got back to Jerusalem, he met with some very unsavory conditions. The people so quickly turned from their excitement that they had felt for the Lord.

Now, do not mistake religious excitement for true revival. There are a lot of times during a special emphasis, people can get all excited. It is the continuing work that I am interested in.

Not how many came forward during a meeting, but a year later, how many are still going on with the Lord. There is where the true measure of a revival is discovered. Not in the excitement of the meeting itself, but in the lasting fruit.

Jesus said to his disciples, John 15, you haven't chosen me, but I've chosen you and ordained you that you should be my disciples and that you should bring forth fruit and that your fruit should remain. The lasting fruit of the ministry, that's what is important. And that's really what thrills me when I am gathered with you because God has worked marvelously in our midst.

No one can deny that. This is an exciting move of God and work of God. But if the Lord carries one of these days, I'm going to be blessed.

And the Lord is going to keep his promise to me. For he said, if I go away, I will come again and receive you unto myself that where I am there you may be also. And the Lord is going to keep that promise to me.

Now, Dr. Orr, the one that Mike was mentioning, he was a walking encyclopedia on revival. I mean, this fellow could just start anywhere, any date in history and tell you what the Lord was doing. I mean, he's a walking encyclopedia on revival.

And he was very interested in what God was doing here because revival was his thing. And we had many wonderful times together, and he would say, Chuck, what are you doing to perpetuate? He said, there are so many revivals that spring up. And when that instrument that God has used passes on, then so many times things just sort of slough off.

What have you done to perpetuate? And I said, well, it's the training of the young men. And I can go and rest in peace tonight if the Lord should say, okay, Chuck, time to come home. I could go tonight and be at perfect peace that the work of God is going to continue, that it is lasting fruit because of you who have caught the vision of the teaching of the Word and have gone out and have established your works upon the Word of God.

I know that the fruit is lasting fruit because it has been built upon the Word and you've caught the vision and you're continuing to follow the model of just teaching God's Word to the hungry hearts of his people. When Nehemiah returned, it was a great disappointment. The 13th chapter of Nehemiah tells us of some of the conditions that he discovered.

Eliashib, who was the high priest, and here's the problem. A corrupted priesthood means spiritual decline. And Eliashib, the high priest, he had oversight of the temple and he had prepared for Tobiah of all people a great chamber, which used to be one of the big storehouses in the temple.

He refurbished it, remodeled it, and made a lovely chamber for Tobiah. Tobiah, that man who was angry when Nehemiah came because there was one who was seeking the good of the people of God. Tobiah, the one who said concerning the wall as they started to build it, if a little fox would go up against it, he could knock it down.

The one who by ridicule was seeking to discourage the people. Tobiah, one of those in the conspiracy to kill Nehemiah. Now here he is, comfortably quartered right in the temple itself as an accommodation to him by Eliashib.

And so, Nehemiah explains in verse 6, this all happened because he wasn't around. He had gone back to Artaxerxes. And so, verse 7, I came to Jerusalem and I understood of the evil that Eliashib had done for Tobiah in preparing him a chamber in the courts of the house of God, and it grieved me sore.

Therefore, I cast him out with all of his household stuff. He took the furniture and everything, just tossed the whole thing out and tossed Tobiah out on his ear. Sometimes there is a call for drastic action among the people.

And there was a need here for drastic, decisive, immediate action. Now, what was the problem? Why is it that people can be all excited, returning back to the celebration of the feast, worshiping God, weeping before God, fasting, praying, and then how is it that so quickly they can just return back to the old rut that they were in, and even become worse? The early part of the chapter, the first few verses, perhaps gives to us a hint, an indication of what the problem was. For it speaks of, as they were reading the word of God, they were reading the law of Moses, they discovered in the law of Moses that God had said that the Moabites or the Ammonites were not to come into the temple of God forever.

Because when the children of Israel were passing through their land in their journey to the promised land, they did not come out to help them, but stood against them. And so, God ordered that they were not allowed to come into the temple of God forever. Now, what had happened is that the people had begun to intermarry with those from Ashdod, those from Ammon, and those from Moab, so that the kids were sort of half-breed.

They were speaking half the language of Ashdod and half the language of the Jews. And there were what was called the mixed multitude. Now, we find in the book of Exodus that when the children of Israel came

out of Egypt, there came with them a mixed multitude from Egypt.

We read in the book of Numbers that as they were there in the wilderness, the mixed multitude began to lust after the things of Egypt, and they began to cry, and they began to complain, and they said, we're sick of this bland, yucky manna. Manna for breakfast, manna for lunch, manna for dinner. We don't even have any garlic or onions to cook it with.

We're sick of it. And they began to mourn for the garlicks and the leeks and the onions of the flesh plots of Egypt. Oh, remember those delicious onions.

Man, what I wouldn't give for an onion now. And it spread throughout the camp of Israel, and they began to murmur and complain against the Lord, and God began to plague them. But it was the mixed multitude who fell to lusting after the flesh.

In our churches, we have a mixed multitude who are mixed with the people of God. You know that it is true. You have those people in your church who are dedicated and who are committed to following Jesus Christ.

They're full on. They're ready to go. They're eager and wanting to just have more and more and more of the Lord.

They just can't seem to get enough. But then there is also that mixed multitude who are lusting after the flesh. They're there on Sunday morning, unless there's something better to do.

Super Bowl Sunday, you're not apt to find them. Or on especially sunny days, or on rainy days. It takes just a special kind of day.

The mixed multitude that have a detrimental effect upon the whole body, because they're the kind that sort of complain. Can't we have more entertainment? Can't we have more parties? All you want to do is study the Word. That's not very exciting, don't you find that sort of bland sometimes? We need some excitement.

Let's get a prophet here who can call out our name. And the mixed multitude are always a problem that have to be dealt with. Don't let the mixed multitude hold back the people.

Don't cater to them. Minister to those who want to go on with the Lord. And if the mixed multitude happens to fall away, rejoice.

God often subtracts in order that he may multiply. Tobiah, an enemy of the work of God, comfortably quartered in the temple of God. That just seems to be totally incongruous.

Another problem. Verse 10, I perceive that the portion for the Levites had not been given to them. For the Levites and the singers that had done the work had fled everyone to his field.

In other words, the people had quit tithing. They had quit supporting the work of God. Now, before he left, they had set up the singers again like they had in the times of David and Asaph.

They had set up the order of the priesthood. Everything was functioning and going great. Oh, it's all in, you know, fine.

I can take off for a while. Can go back to Persia. Be nice to see the king and the king loves me so much.

And, you know, and it's just, you get a lot of perks back there in Persia. I go back to Persia for a while and he goes back. But when he comes back, the whole thing is just deteriorated.

It's gone to pot. The priests, the singers that had all been established, set in order, they're all back again working in their fields because they've got to survive. And the priest had their own property and they would work their fields and come and spend some time during the priesthood.

But here they had to forsake the ministry of the temple in order to survive. They were back in their field. So, he said, I fought with the rulers.

I called the rulers. I contended with them. We have a company that takes care of our arrangements when we're in Israel with our hotels.

They take care of all of our hotels, the buses, and they, that's their responsibility. And this one gal, Anna, who works for the company over there, she's always telling us about the problem that she has with these hotel managers who are wanting to cut corners or whatever. And she says, I fight with him.

And she's always talking about how she's fighting with them, you know. And that word contend is the same thing. I fought with them.

And I said, why is the house of God forsaken? I gathered them together and I set them in their place. And then I brought all of Judah, then brought all of Judah rather, the tithe of their corn, the new wine, the oil, the treasuries. He, you know, rebuked them and got things going again.

And the tribe of Judah began to bring again their tithes. And he made the treasurers over those treasuries. And he put faithful men in the office of distributing of the goods to their brethren.

Another problem. In those days, I saw in Judah, some who were treading their wine presses on the Sabbath and bringing in sheaves and loading down their donkeys with wine and grates and figs and all manner of burdens, which they brought into Jerusalem on the Sabbath day. And I testified against them in the day wherein they sold the vituals.

So he saw on the Sabbath day, these people bearing burdens, loading down their little donkeys with wares, treading the wine presses. Now, Mark Martin has done a series of tapes that if any of you have people who are seventh day Adventists or hung up on the seventh day worship, I would recommend that you get these tapes. I covenant that Mark has done.

They are masterful. They're outstanding. Coming from his background, understanding the position of the seventh day Adventist and having been free, he has done a masterful job on these tapes, the tapes of the covenants as he deals with the covenants that God has established with man.

And in every covenant that God has established with man, God has had a sign of that covenant. He established a covenant with Noah. What was the sign of the covenant? Rainbow.

He had established the covenant with Israel. He gave them the law. You keep this law.

I will be your God. You will be my people. Now, what was the sign of the covenant? Keeping the Sabbath day.

Now, circumcision was with Abraham, the family of God. Keeping the Sabbath day, you can read it in Exodus. That was the sign of the covenant with Israel throughout all their generations.

Keeping the Sabbath day. He made a new covenant with us through Jesus Christ. What's the sign? This cup, the blood of Christ, new covenant in my blood shed for the remission of sin.

So, Sabbath day keeping was a sign of God's covenant with the people. Their violating the Sabbath then was the sign of a broken covenant. They had broken now the covenant of God by on the Sabbath day, treading out the grapes, loading down the donkeys, bringing in the wares.

And so, he testified against them, went out and said, stop that now and you're not going to do it again. Now, there were men from Tyre that were around there who brought fish in all manner of wear and they sold these on the Sabbath day to the children of Judah in Jerusalem. So, I fought with the nobles of Judah and I said to them, what evil thing is this that you do? You profane the Sabbath day.

I mean, he got back and he found things in a mess and he jumped right into the middle of it and started grabbing everybody and dealing with the issue. He said, don't you realize that your fathers did the same thing and because they did it, it brought all of this evil, the captivity, the whole problem came out of this kind of stuff. Didn't you learn? Don't you know? What's wrong with you guys? And he contended with him over these things.

So, he ordered, keep the gates closed until the Sabbath day is over. Don't open the gates. Not going to have any kind of traffic going in and out of the gates of Jerusalem on this.

Keep them closed till the day is, the Sabbath day is over. Now, the merchants and the sellers of all these kinds of goods just sort of stayed outside of the city of Jerusalem once or twice, one or two Sabbaths after he'd ordered the gates closed. And so, he said, I went out and I testified to them and I said, why do you lodge here around the wall? If you do it again, I'm going to lay my hands on you.

I'm going to beat you up, man. No wonder Raul likes Nehemiah so much. And so, they evidently, he evidently really seemed serious to them because they quit coming.

They knew that this guy meant business. And so, then he commanded the Levites that they should cleanse themselves and that they should come and make sure that the gates were closed and that the Sabbath day would be kept holy. Another problem.

Amazing that all these problems could arise in so short a time, isn't it? Another problem. In those days also, I saw Jews that had married wives of Ashdod and Ammon and Moab. Their children spoke half the speech of Ashdod.

They couldn't speak in the Jews' language, but they were speaking according to the language of each group, Moabites, Ammonites, and so forth. This really got him upset. I fought with them.

I cursed them. I hit certain of them and I plucked off their hair and I made them swear by God that they would not give their daughters or their sons to these other nationalities, nor would they take daughters or sons from them for their own children. Made them swear, promise.

Had them by the hair of the head. Promise me, man, you're not going to do it. Yank their hair out.

Promise me. Boy, I'd love to take action like Nehemiah sometimes. I think that there is a time for righteous indignation.

Surely, Jesus was indignant when he came into the temple and saw how they had made merchandise there in the temple courts, selling the oxen, the sheep. Made a scourge out of these cords and he began to drive them out, overturning their tables, rebuking them. I think that sometimes we're a little too soft, a little too weak in making a very firm stand against evils that exist within the church.

I think sometimes you have to be very stern with people. There have been people who have disturbed services here and we've told them, if you come on the grounds again and we see you on the grounds, we're calling the police immediately. And when they've come on the grounds again, we've called the police immediately and we've held them, some of them by force until the police got here.

A lot of weirdos and some of them only understand force. I had a man come to my door when Jan, our oldest child, was just a little girl, about the size of the little one I had today and all as cute. She was daddy's doll.

And we had a fellow come to the door and declare that he was Elijah, the prophet that was to come in the last days. And when I was obviously skeptical of his claim, he said, what would you do if something would happen to your little daughter? And I looked him in the eye and I grabbed him by the shirt and I said, if something should happen to my little daughter, I would search the world until I found you and I would kill you with my bare hands. I knew the guy was mentally off and I didn't want him to get any kind of ideas of trying to harm my little girl.

I was serious though. Nehemiah took drastic action in order to get things back in order. Now, you would think and you would hope that you could come to some place in the ministry where things would just be smooth from here on out.

The wall's built, we've celebrated, glory, hallelujah, wonderful, everybody's excited, rejoicing, praising God, wonderful, we've done it, we've done it, we've done it. And here they are in such a mess so soon, gone just for a year and come back and oh, look at this mess. And you would think and you would hope that somehow you could hit a plateau, arrive at a place where you'd have no more problems, but everyone lived happily ever after.

Well, we will, but as long as we are in these bodies and as long as your people are in those bodies, we're going to have to contend with and deal with the problems that arise from the flesh. This 13th chapter and the incidents of the 13th chapter point up to me the necessity of strong leadership. The people need strong leadership.

You remember when Moses brought the children of Israel out of Egypt with many signs and wonders and they came to Mount Sinai and Moses went up on the mount to meet the Lord and Moses was 40 days on the mount, not very long, but before Moses could get back with the two tables of stone upon which God had engraven the laws, the 10 commandments, before he could come back with these stones, the people had come to Aaron and they said, make us gods that we might worship them. As for this man, Moses, we don't know what's happened to him. So, by the time Moses came back with this tremendous spiritual experience, having talked with God, having met with God, having God inscribed with the finger of God on those two tables of stone, the 10 commandments, thou shalt have no other gods before me.

Thou shalt not make any graven image to bow down to them, to worship them. And here he comes back with these holy commandments of God to present them to the people. And before he even gets there, he hears all of this noise and Joshua says, what in the world? There must be a war.

And he says, no, it's not the sound of war. That's the sound of partying. And when they came inside of the camp here, they were all dancing around this golden calf, big orgy, worshiping the golden calf.

And here it is, thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make any graven image. And Moses, in a symbolic way, literally, but it was surely symbolic, took those two tables of stone and threw them on the ground and they broke in pieces.

The law had already been broken by the people. The covenant had already been broken by the people. Forty days, you come back and things are chaotic.

People are worshiping a golden calf. The people need strong leadership. If God has made you a leader of his flock in your community, take care of the flock of God.

The word translated feed my sheep in Greek, one of them there is feed, the other is tend or take over, oversee, take care of my sheep. And when Peter was writing to the elders, being an elder himself, he used that same word, take care of the flock of God that is among you. Tend them.

Don't forsake them. Don't neglect them. If you are gone from them too long or too much, all kinds of evils will start springing up.

I believe that Satan oftentimes seeks to divert our attention to other fields and we soon find ourselves neglecting the basic call of God upon our life. There's something rather heady about having people weep as you leave and say, oh, please come back. Oh, we need you desperately here.

Oh, no one can minister to us like you can. We need you desperately. And there's something heady about having invitations come to speak to giant rallies, to speak in soccer stadiums in Romania, to address 5,000 youth in Hungary.

And there's something heady about that when they write and say, oh, we've heard your tapes and we feel that you have the message and oh, we feel that you can just do a lot here. And there's a strong temptation to say, yes, I need to go. And there's something very heady about being there and having all of the excitement and seeing all of this and being, you know, taken to the hotels and people say, oh, you're doing, oh, you can't believe, you know, how wonderful it is to have you here.

There's something very heady about all of that. But watch out. You can neglect the basic call that God has upon your life to minister to that flock of yours.

And if you spend too much time away from the flock, you'll find that without strong leadership, they can get into all kinds of evil. Several years ago, God called Dave Wilkerson, a really hick country preacher to New York to minister to those gangs deeply involved in drugs. And he went with all his naivety into this sophisticated metropolitan area where there were all of these gangs and all of the corruptions and beatings and everything else.

And just led by the Lord, divinely protected by God, went right up against the gates of hell and began to shake them. And God blessed Dave Wilkerson there and gave him tremendous fruit. And as the result of

the book, *The Cross and the Switchblade* that was published, sort of sharing what God was doing in the streets of New York, invitations began to come to Dave Wilkerson from all over the United States to come and speak to these great youth rallies.

And David Wilkerson began to travel around the United States to speak in these giant youth rallies. He began to wear a white jacket, suede shoes, styled hair. He was successful.

And he was no longer on the streets of New York, but he was now a authority in youth problems and was speaking at giant rallies all over. His name drew a crowd, but his heart became empty. Why? Because God did not call Dave Wilkerson to speak at giant rallies around the country.

God called Dave Wilkerson to the streets of New York. And Dave began to flounder spiritually. Not that he left the Lord, but he was just empty.

He was just miserable. He had left his calling. He had left his place of calling.

Satan had diverted him into these other activities, legitimate activities, of course. Kids coming to Christ in these rallies, of course. But that's not where God had called Dave Wilkerson, you see.

Started this big ranch in Texas, started the teen challenges all over the United States, began to sit in this fancy office, became an administrator, jetting around the country here, there, and everywhere when the call of God was to the streets of New York. I'm happy to say that Dave is back on the streets in New York, happy again. But he went a long, circuitous route.

There is always that danger of leaving the basic primary calling of God because of the attractiveness, the allurements of faraway places with strange sounding names, with hungry hearts and hands that are outstretched waiting for you. But many a pastor has come back from these places and found that the church that he was pastoring is in shambles. Divisions have come up.

There wasn't any strong leadership to deal with it. And people have become fractured. The Lord has been dealing with me, and perhaps this is why I'm so into this, because the Lord has been dealing with me personally on this subject.

So I'm just talking out of my own heart and out of what the Lord has been dealing with me on this subject. That's why this year I've sort of taken a sabbatical from going out. Not a sabbatical from the church here.

I'm giving really more time here, spending more time right here. This is the first summer I'm going to be home in years. I mean, just all summer long.

And I'm loving it more. I'm just loving being right here. This is where God has called me.

The fellows who have the pastor's conferences around the country know that I haven't come this year. The only one I went to was Hawaii, and I was needing a little vacation. But last year, I think there were 30 weeks that I was gone Monday through Wednesday in conferences, speaking at various conventions and conferences and all.

Tuesday is my day that I usually take off. I wasn't keeping Sabbath. I wasn't taking one in Sabbath.

I get home on Thursday, do the Thursday night study, work all day Friday and Saturday to catch up with things that are in the office, do the services Sunday and take off either Sunday night or Monday morning

early for the next convention or rally or conference. And I was hardly home last fall at all, except I was always careful to be here Thursday night and Sundays. But the Lord began to speak to me.

Now, thank God for good assistance, and we still had leadership and things didn't go to pieces. But some things did arise that I probably could have dealt with had I been here. You see, Nehemiah was the recognized leader of the people.

And the people looked to him for leadership. People look to you for leadership. People look to me for leadership.

Some of you are going to return from this conference. You've only been here a few days, but you're going to find some problems have arisen since you've been gone. You may even find that they voted not to have you as their pastor anymore.

Don't neglect the flock of God. Being a leader, he dealt decisively with the situations and with the problems. He was stern.

He was severe. And because he was their leader, they received his rebuke. Had anyone else tried to take those same stern measures that Nehemiah had taken, it would have created a revolution.

Anybody else had grabbed and pulled their hair out and smacked them across the cheek and all. There have been some real problems. But because they recognized Nehemiah as the leader, the God-appointed and ordained leader, they received his rebuke and they received his correction.

If God has called you to be the shepherd over a flock, no one else can take the necessary actions to protect that flock and the purity of the flock. Beware about neglecting that flock of God over which the made you the overseer because often projected periods of absence will take its toll. Limit your times away from the pulpit.

Be there for the people. That's what the Spirit says to me out of the 13th chapter of Nehemiah. Take care of the ministry to which God has called it.

Father, we thank you that you have called us and ordained that we should be your disciples and that we should bring forth fruit and that our fruit should remain. We thank you, Lord, that you have anointed us as shepherds over your flock. Help us, Lord, that we might be shepherds that are pleasing to you, tending the flock, feeding the flock, loving the flock, nourishing the flock.

In Jesus' name, amen.

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