

Getting Back to the Bible

by David Legge

The sermon emphasizes the importance of God's Word and the need for a back to the Bible movement to experience spiritual revival.

Duration: 39:04

Scripture: Nehemiah 7:1-3, Nehemiah 8:1-6, Nehemiah 8:9-14, Nehemiah 8:16-18

Topics: "Biblical Revival", "Gods Word"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the importance of getting back to the Bible. The sermon is based on Nehemiah chapter 8, where the people of Israel gather together to hear the reading of the law of Moses. The preacher emphasizes that revival among God's people is sparked by a return to God's word. The first section of the book of Nehemiah focuses on the reconstruction of the walls of Jerusalem, while the second section, which begins in chapter 8, focuses on the re-instruction of God's people through the reading of the law.

Transcript

There was a time in the life of the Israelites, and indeed right the way through all of the history of God's people, whether it be the Jews in the Old Testament or indeed the Church in the New, and right throughout Church history, when God's Word, although it stands forever, had been forgotten or sidelined by the people. It never changes, it is always relevant. You don't need to make God's Word relevant, it is relevant, but sometimes it can be sidelined or even forgotten.

We're going to read about that and think about it today. The title of my message today is Getting Back to the Bible, verse 1, chapter 8. And all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the street that was before the water gate. They spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the Lord had commanded to Israel.

And Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation, both of men and women, and all that could hear with understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month. And he read therein before the street that was before the water gate, from the morning until midday, before the men and the women and those that could understand. And the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law.

And Ezra the scribe stood upon a pulpit of wood, which they had made for the purpose, and beside him stood Machariah, and Shema, and Ananiah, and Uriah, and Hilkiah, and Massiah, on his right hand and

on his left hand, Padiah, and Mishael, and Malkiah, and Hashem, and Hashba Dabnah, and Zechariah, and Meshulam. And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was above all the people. And when he opened it, all the people stood up.

And Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God. And all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands. And they bowed their heads and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground.

Also Jeshua, and Banai, and Sherabiah, and Jamin, and Aquab, and Shabbatai, and Hobjah, and Messiah, and Kelita, and Azariah, and Jehozabad, Hanan, Peliah, and the Levites caused the people to understand the law, and the people stood in their place. So they read in the book of the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading. And Nehemiah, which is Tershatha, and Ezra, the priest, the scribe, and the Levites that taught the people, said unto all the people, This day is holy unto the Lord your God.

Mourn not, nor weep, for all the people wept when they heard the words of the law. Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared. For this day is holy unto our God, unto our Lord.

Neither be ye sorry, for the joy of the Lord is your strength. So the Levites stilled all the people, saying, Hold your peace, for the day is holy, neither be ye grieved. And all the people went their way to eat, and to drink, and to send portions, and to make great mirth, because they had understood the words that were declared unto them.

And on the second day were gathered together the chief of the fathers of all the people, and the priests, and the Levites, unto Ezra the scribe, even to understand the words of the law. And they found written in the law, which the Lord had commanded by Moses, that the children of Israel should dwell in booths in the feast of the seventh month, and that they should publish and proclaim in all their cities, and in Jerusalem, saying, Go forth unto the mount, and fetch olive branches, and pine branches, and myrtle branches, and palm branches, and branches of thick trees, to make booths, as it is written. So the people went forth, and brought them, and made themselves booths, every one upon the roof of his house, and in their courts, and in the court of the house of the God, in the street of the water gate, and in the street of the gate of Ephraim.

And all the congregation of them that were come again out of the captivity made booths, and sat under the booths. For since the days of Joshua, the son of none, unto that day had not the children of Israel done so, and there was a great gladness. Also day by day, from the first day unto the last day, he read in the book of the law of God, and they kept the feast seven days, and on the eighth day was a solemn assembly, according unto the manner.

We end God's word at verse 18. Now I did not say, I don't remember saying at the very beginning of this series, that the book of Nehemiah really is divided into two sections. The first is found in chapters one to six, and you will have noticed that we skipped out a chapter, because really chapter seven is all an organization, and you can read it at your own leisure at home, and we may refer to some facts within it throughout this morning's study, and further studies, but we're skipping over to chapter eight, but really the first section is for chapter one to six, and the second section, chapter seven, and indeed further on, the last seven chapters of the book.

The first six chapters that we have spent nine weeks on, was chiefly taken up with the theme of reconstruction of the walls, reconstruction of the walls of Jerusalem, and indeed reconstruction of the whole city, but the last seven chapters that we're now entering into this week, is the re-instruction of God's people. They had now rebuilt the city of God, and built up those protective walls, which were protective for various reasons that we looked into over the weeks, but now it was time from God's word and the book, to re-instruct God's people regarding who they were, and what they were to be as his chosen people. Now what I want you to know right away, before we go on any further this morning in chapter eight, is that what we are witnessing in this chapter is a revival among God's people, a spiritual revival.

I hope you do know that revival has got nothing whatsoever to do with those who are not Christian. It's got nothing to do with people being saved. Revival is chiefly something to do with those who are believers, those who are saved.

You see, the very simple meaning of the word revive is to bring back to life. You can only bring back to life if there was life there in the beginning, and so although there may be an offshoot of revival and a side blessing of revival in folk getting saved because of the state of the church and because they're on fire and they're going out with the gospel and the power of the spirit, primarily revival has to begin and start in believers' lives. New life, the Holy Ghost of God giving the whole sway in the lives of believers.

So as long as we understand that, we'll not make any mistake this morning. But if you've ever read the biblical revivals, or indeed the revivals of history, you will see that there are two characteristic features in all of them. One is the unadulterated and straight preaching of God's word.

That is one prominent feature of every revival that has ever happened in history, the preaching of God's word in part. But the second chief characteristic that you will clearly notice, if you've ever read anything about these revivals in history or in the bible, is there is always an active response from God's people. In other words, when they hear the word of God, they obey the word of God in an extraordinary sense that they have never done before, and one of the outcomes of that is a great joy among God's people and overflowing, continually perpetuating blessing that just seems as if it's never ever going to stop.

So two characteristics in every revival in history, in every revival in the word of God, and in the revival that we have been reading about in chapter 8 of Nehemiah this morning. One, the preaching of God's word, and two, the active obedient response of God's people to that word which engendered joy within their life. Take the reformation for instance.

The whole of Europe, the whole of the world was in darkness. It was during a period of the dark ages when men began to harbor after and hamper for God's word rather than the teaching of the church of Rome. The church of Rome had shackled God's word and bound it and only the real religious authorities and those who were thought to be educated enough were allowed to read it.

The fact of the matter is there were men like John Wycliffe who came along and took their lives in their hands and lost their lives inevitably because they knew the importance of God's word. And from then on through Martin Luther and John Calvin and all the various reformers, the word of God was put in people's language and the New Testament church was reborn as it were out of the darkness of Romanism. Where the word of God is bound or suppressed or forgotten, darkness prevails.

But when the word of God is rediscovered, there is revival. I know that a lot of the reformation was on a political level but there was no doubt that there were many people swept into the kingdom of God because

the word of God was found again and preached in an undiluted form. One of the greatest revivalists this time in the 18th century by the name of George Whitefield records his own relationship to the Holy Scriptures in his journals and I want to read it to you.

He said, I began to read the Holy Scriptures upon my knees, laying aside all other books and praying over if possible every line and word and this proved meat indeed and drink indeed to my soul and I daily received fresh light and power from above. I got more true knowledge from reading the book of God in one month than I could ever have acquired from all the writings of men. George Whitefield, a very learned man, but a man who realized the importance of God's book and God's book alone and because of that he was sent forth of God and saw thousands brought into the kingdom of Christ through his preaching.

Jonathan Goforth was another man who was greatly used of God in China and elsewhere in revival from the year 1908 onwards and looking back at those great years of blessing in his life he records in one of his writings, we wish to affirm too that we can entertain no hope of a mighty globe encircling Holy Spirit revival without there being first a back to the Bible movement. There needs to be, he said, for a revival that is big enough to bring our loved ones to Christ, there needs to be first and foremost a back to the Bible movement. Goforth certainly practiced what he preached because for 19 years he read through the Chinese Bible, New Testament, 55 times.

Of course it was not his first language. You add to Goforth and to Whitefield and to men like Wycliffe, Wesley, Charles and John, Spurgeon, Brownlow North, it was used in Ulster in revival, Jonathan Edwards used in North America in revival and all these great men of God believed in the Bible. There is a very interesting point and an historical fact that revival never ever emanates out of the liberal wing of the church of Jesus Christ because the liberal wing dilutes the word of God.

Now the point at which we have reached in chapter 8 of Nehemiah, the walls are finished, but isn't it very telling that the work of God as it was prescribed to Nehemiah is finished, the practical end of things, but there is still a spiritual vacuum within the people's hearts. And according to chapter 7 that we didn't read, the people are now well ordered, they're well defended and they're well governed by Nehemiah. Yet in this community of nice homes and good jobs and great security, there is an emptiness.

There was something that was missing. And I believe if we could put it in our context today, it was simply this, the Lord was not given his chief place in their lives, the place that he ought to have had. And what a lesson there is for us today, especially where we are as the Iron Hall, that it's not enough to have well constructed superstructure, it's not enough to have all the best music that we can have and all the best preaching if you can get it somewhere.

If there is nothing real in our spiritual lives which knows the unction of God's spirit, if inside we are still empty, if there's no power, if there's no fire, if there's no vitality, it means nothing. In chapter 6, Nehemiah said this work was a great work. There's no doubt about it.

I believe this work is a great work. I believe everything that goes on here is a great work. But the fact of the matter is, if all we have are these externalities, we have nothing.

Don Francisco, a gospel singer, most of you probably wouldn't like his music, but I like it. One of his songs goes like this. It's called The Steeple Song.

I don't care how many buses you own or the size of your sanctuary. It doesn't matter how steep your steeple is if you're sitting on a cemetery. I don't care if you pave your parking lot and put pads upon your pews.

What good is a picture-perfect stage if you're missing all the queues? What does it matter? If the power of God, the glory of God is missing, you can have beautiful architectural structures, well-oiled programs, but it means nothing if God's power and God's presence are absent. Now, here's how they got back the presence of God. How do you get back the presence of God? Well, they got back to the word of God.

I believe you, time allows, with five points. There are steps. There are five steps to spiritual revival.

Here's the first. They read the Bible. Now, that might seem very elementary, but that's where they started, and that's where we all need to start.

They read the Bible. Secondly, they recognized the meaning. Thirdly, they responded in obedience.

Fourthly, they rediscovered lost truths. And fifthly, they rediscovered strengthening joy. Let's start with the first one.

They read the Bible, verses one to seven. First one says that they all gathered together as one man. They were united.

We don't need to go in any further. Just to say they were united together around God's word. Psalm 133 says how good and how blessed it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.

And later on in the psalm, it says that God commands the blessing where such unity is. Now, brethren, we need to be united. This gathering of Nehemiah's was not a Bible conference.

Rather, it was a Bible convention. Now, you say, well, what's the difference? Well, a Bible conference is a place for discussion, but there was no open discussion here. And some of you love Bible conferences where you can discuss to the cows, come home, things that don't matter.

But the fact of the matter is this was a convention. For conventions are a place of decision. God was bringing his word through his servant, Israel, and he wasn't looking for a red light or a yellow light or a green light as to whether the people agreed with what God was saying.

He was wanting decision, not discussion. The united people are here in waiting on God. Where are they? It says that they're at the water gate.

Do you remember that we went round all the gates and they had typical meanings. They represented things. Do you remember what the water gate represented? Can you remember? The Word of God.

Remember? The Word of God and scriptures represented by water. Well, here they are in a typical sense. They're coming to the cleansing, refreshing, reviving part of the Word of God.

This is the place to be. Look at it. The open place before the water gate.

Have you got an open place before God's word where your heart is open, your mind is open? Do you come with God's people even and gather together around God's word? I'll tell you this. This might be a very, very, very general statement and you might think it's a bit simplistic, but I'm going to make it because

I believe it's founded on scripture. If God's people with one mind gather around God's word to seek his will and his will alone, they will experience revival.

But can I ask you, do you gather around God's word with God's people? Do you know where we chiefly gather around God's word? It's on a Monday night. It's at our Bible reading. Many of you don't come.

Some of you can come and I acknowledge that, but many of you can't come and should come. And if you did come, this place would be packed out. And if the visitors were taken away from a Monday night, we would be ashamed at how few from the iron who are actually here.

These people realize the importance of gathering around God's word as one people. And when you do come, as many of you come, do you come with the spirit of conference or the spirit of convention? Are you coming to see whether I'll agree with what he says today, whether it's wrong or right, or do you come saying, what will God say to me today? Oh, there's a difference. Well, the cry came from the people and that's what I like to notice here.

It came from the people. Bring out the book. Ezra will want to be revived.

We'll want to know God. Put away all that rubbish that we've known for years in captivity that's done our hearts no good and bring out the book. Well, you don't hear that cry today.

Bring out everything but the book. Do you bring the book to church? No, we don't want to get legalistic, but the fact of the matter is a lot of people don't even bring their Bibles to church. They're spoon fed.

They're not searching the scriptures to see whether these things are such. Can I ask you fathers and you mothers, do you bring out the book in the home when there's a decision to be made? What's the first thing you do? Pick up the phone and ring your solicitor, your insurance broker, or do you bring out the book and see what God says? Leaders in the church, in your deliberations and your planning for the future of this fellowship, how often do you bring out the book and say, what says the scriptures on this? I want you to notice that the people didn't ask what Ezra's opinion on the matter was. They didn't say, Nehemiah, you're a very wise man and you're our governor and our leader.

What do you think about all this? They didn't even call Zerubbabel and ask what his thoughts on the matter were. They respected God's servants and God's servants ought to be respected because they're sent to minister God's word, but we ought never to forget that they are only ministers of the word of God. It is the word of God that is what is important.

I'm not meant to be a minister of science or a minister of philosophy or even a minister of theology. You've got to be a minister of God's word and preach God's word as it is. I don't know whether you've noticed this or not, but sometimes great men of God are quoted and adhered to as if they were the same authority as the word of God.

You ever notice this? Maybe there's a discussion or something, something's being debated and someone says, oh, but Mr. So-and-so, he didn't teach that. Or he did teach that. John Calvin, he said this.

J. N. Darby, he said that. A. W. Pink, he said the other. C. I. Schofield, he believes this.

And many of those men are great men. And I agree with a lot of what some of them said. I'm being careful there.

But the fact of the matter is they do not have the authority of God's word no matter who they are. Ezra was asked, bring out the book, the book of God. And we must be careful that we do not teach for doctrine the commandments of men.

Let's answer a couple of questions. Who was there? It says men were there, women were there, and all who could understand were there. That infers children who could understand what was being read.

And you'll see a little bit later that it would have been very hard to understand a lot of it because it wasn't even spoken in their language. But Ezra felt that it was sufficient that they understand the translation and they must have done, otherwise God's word would not have said it. Now when we read further, how was it done? Very simply and very similar to what we do today, there was a public reading from an erected, a makeshift erected pulpit there and then.

So that's what it means when it says Ezra stood over the people and they read the word of God constantly with probably breaks of exposition in between from daybreak, the morning dawning, until noon, until the afternoon, 12 o'clock. Many of you could have stuck that. And what was the reaction of the people? When's this boy going to shut up? You've gone well over your time.

Was that the reaction? Or as some people say, oh, people who do those things that don't know any better, that have nothing better to do. These people had been years in captivity without God's word and now they've got it and they couldn't do without it. You know what their reaction was? They lifted up their hands to heaven and can I say there's nothing wrong with doing that? Charismatics might do it, but you can do it too if it's from your heart and it's in prayer to God and praise and it would do us well if we all did it from time to time.

And they said, amen, amen. They agreed that simply means thus, it is correct. Amen and amen.

And you know what else they did? They fell on their faces before God and they worshipped at the reading of the Holy Scriptures. My friends, they didn't know what we know, but they had a reverence and a respect for God's Holy Word. Some people would call it bibliology that they were almost worshipping the Bible and some people throw that charge at us because we take the Bible so seriously, but that is a lie.

We are acknowledging the author of this book on this sovereign will and purpose which is found therein. Do we have a respect for God's word? Do we reverence it? Do we have a reverence for God's word? The cry was bring the book. It was the cry that brought them out of the darkness.

It was the cry that brought us out of the darkness and the reformation and every revival since it. It freed them, it freed us and it will free us again if we bring back the book. Now, can I ask you, I don't want to rush over this and have so much information here this morning, I'll probably not get through it, but I want to ask you a very, very simple question now as individuals.

Do you read your Bible? I think I've said this before that sometimes in counseling situations, people have problems with sins and they come to me or they have problems with other things in their mind and they really don't know what the answer is. And one of the first questions that I've learned to ask is, are you reading God's word? And usually the answer comes back in the one that I know I should be. David said in Psalm 119, thy word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against thee.

God's word is what pushes all that sin and dirt out, but you can only push it out if you're pushing God's word in. Everyone, are you daily reading God's word? Are you preferably reading the Bible through once

in the year? We say of that great man of God, George Muller, that he read the Bible over 200 times in his lifetime. William Evans, who in the early part of the last century pastored College Church in Wheaton, they said of him, you might not believe it, believe it or not, that he memorized the entire Bible in the King James Version and the New Testament in the American Standard Version.

Billy Graham says of his medical missionary father-in-law, Nelson Bell, that he made it to the point in his life, I quote, to rise every morning at 4.30 and spend two to three hours in Bible reading. He didn't use that time to read commentaries or to write. He didn't do his correspondence or any other work.

He just read the scriptures every morning and he was a walking Bible encyclopedia. People wondered at the holiness and the greatness in his life. It was Spurgeon who said, a Bible which is falling apart usually belongs to someone who isn't.

Imagine asking, having to ask Christians, do you read your Bible? But how many of you read your Bible this morning? How many of you will read your Bible today at all? How many of you will open your Bible between this morning and this time next week? My friend, if you want revival in your life, you need to know revival in Bible reading in your life. Let's deal with the second point. They recognized the meaning.

Verse eight, this is very interesting. So they read in the book of the law of God distinctly and gave the sense and caused them to understand the reading. Now here we have the fact that they recognized the meaning, the characteristics of authentic Bible exposition.

The first thing was he read God's word. Now this might seem elementary, but this is where we've got to begin. It is not the opinion of men that exposition rests upon, but it is the establishment first and foremost that all truth comes from God.

He is the source, not my wisdom, not my expertise or my education, whatever it may be. They read from God's word. Secondly, there was a respect for God's word.

The people listened intently. Verses five and six, and we see the response. But the third thing is this, the truth was explained so that all could understand.

All that were at an age of understanding. What lessons there are for preachers in our midst this morning and myself. Those gifted in God's truth translated and gave the meaning.

It's interesting that Nehemiah knew that this wasn't his gift. He had been using his gifts up to chapter seven and erecting these walls, but his gift wasn't a preacher. So he stood aside and in came Ezra.

It's like John the Baptist. His job was making roads, preparing the way for the Lord. Nehemiah's job was building walls, but when he knew his job was over, he got out of the way.

Maybe we need to get out of the way for someone else to take over. But here is Ezra coming to the fore. The word of God is preached.

Ezra reads the scriptures in Hebrew, but the word here for understanding really in verse eight, he read in the law distinctly and gave the sense. That word distinctly means making a distinction. It literally is translated.

You might say, why did the Jews need the Bible translated when they wrote it? Here's the reason. For years they had been in captivity in Babylon and they had learned things in Babylon that caused them not

to understand God's word and they'd even learned another language. They were not speaking Aramaic, so they didn't even know the language that the Bible was being written.

And Ezra, he read it. These other men around him that we had trouble reading this morning, they translated God's word and expounded it to them. But isn't there a lesson in this for us all? They recognized the readings.

They were Jews from birth. They'd lost their tongue. They'd lost their culture.

They'd come out of Babylon back to Jerusalem. Their mentality and their lifestyle were worldly. And when they heard God's word, they didn't even recognize it because their ears were Babylonish.

There was a communication breakdown. And some of us might find it hard to get into God's word again because it's been so long since we've been in it. And because our lives have imbibed things that are a total antithesis with God's law, commands and rules and principles.

But although it was hard for them, although it was inconvenient, they unlocked the door of understanding. And someone with ability led them beneath the surface of God's will, and they understood. Now listen to this.

They didn't have a Bible in their own language. The possibility is Ezra had the only Bible that was in existence at this particular time, yet they heard God's word, they understood God's word, and through the powerful preaching of God's servant, they obeyed God's word. And they didn't have one iota of the amount of things that we have been blessed with in this day, but they were strict to heaven.

And I say that we spend much of our time occupying our minds with unanswerable questions and irreconcilable issues rather than that which is clear and plain within God's word. Don't we? It puts in the time thinking about all these issues that you cannot reconcile, you cannot make sense of. But the fact of the matter is, as Mark Twain said, it's not what I don't understand about the Bible that bothers me, it's what I do understand.

Are you obedient to what you do understand? They read the Bible, they recognized the meaning thirdly, they responded in obedience. The truth was applied in verse 9. They did that day, they wept, they cried for guilt. Why were they crying? Because they knew that they were the ones being spoken of.

They had committed the sins, they were guilty in the eyes of God. They were thinking about years of darkness, where there was no spiritual input in everything that they had done. And they were now realizing how far away from God they had been.

When was the last time you and I wept as we read God's word and applied it to our heart? When was it? Has it ever been? They read it, they recognized the meaning, they responded in obedience. And here's something interesting, they recovered lost truth. We read that on the second day, verse 13, the chiefs of the people came together and the reading of God's word continued.

But there was a notable discovery that was made in verse 14. The discovery simply was that, yes, they had celebrated for years what was called the Feast of the Tabernacles. But since the days of Joshua, the captivity and the conquest of the promised land, since those days, one particular feature of the Feast of the Tabernacles had not been obeyed.

What was it? Well, it was the building of booths. They used to get these olive branches and all sorts of things mentioned here in these verses. And they used to build these little huts and the people would live in them for the duration of this feast to celebrate the Feast of the Tabernacles.

They were celebrating the feast, but they were not adhering fully to God's word in the celebration. And this is remarkable because at once when the people in Nehemiah's day recognized the challenge that they had not done this thing, they were obedient there and then to it. They could have said, well, here's something that hasn't been observed for a thousand years or more.

You know, all that matter is still in this book. They could have said, well, David, the great king, the king of our glory period and Solomon, his son, paid no attention to these feasts. Even in the days of Joshua, these things were not built.

But the fact of the matter is, because it was in this book, that is what motivated them to obedience. I hear people saying today, as long as the spirit of the word is adhered to, it doesn't matter how you obey it in form. As long as you're in your heart, adhering to a principle within God's word, it doesn't matter what the form is.

Now, there's no doubt that the principle is more important than the form. But let me tell you this, if the form is stipulated in scripture, you've got to obey the form as well as the principle. And if you find it in God's word, conference is not asked for.

Your opinion is not applied for from God. What God wants from you is obedience. It was awkward for them to implement this since the days of Samuel, David, and Solomon.

But God blessed them for it because they found it written within the book. Are we like that? You know what the Christian church is regulated by as far as I can see today in the West? It's what everybody else does. They don't do that down there.

Well, you know what they're doing down there? Why can't we do it here? Friends, I'm not making a moral comment or judgment on anything that anybody else does, but we ought to go by the book, not what others are doing. The people in Nehemiah could have said, David was blessed and he didn't see this as an essential. Samuel was blessed, it wasn't essential for his life.

They said it is written in the book. We will do it. They recovered lost truths.

Fifthly and finally, they rediscovered strengthening joy. These people had lost their touch with God. Maybe they thought God had left them.

The fact of the matter was they had left God. But now that God was back in his word, they thought God was angry. That's the way some people feel or maybe even are made to feel when they get away from God in their life and sin enters.

And then all of a sudden they hear God's word and they get convicted. And you know, there's nothing wrong with conviction. In fact, we could do with a lot more of tears of contrition and repentance.

This is what we have here. They began to weep, they began to mourn. But you know what Nehemiah said, or sorry, Ezra said, don't weep, don't mourn for this day is holy unto the Lord your God.

Verse nine, mourn not nor weep for all the people when they heard the words of the law. If you're like these people and you have sidelined God's word in your life. The devil sometimes comes along and he says, you will never make it back.

You have done this or done that, and that has cut you off from God. And there's no opportunity or no chance really for you to be what you used to be or for God to bless you. And that even discourages some people from praying or from coming to Bible readings or from reading God's word and studying it themselves.

The accuser, the devil says you're no use. It's no use trying this. Forget about it.

You're a hopeless sinner. Just give in because you've been cut off from God. God's angry with you.

Now, yes, repentance is needed and we're instructed to weep and to mourn. But the people were told in Nehemiah's day, God is not just angry with your sin, but God is a God who wants to forgive. And God is a God who wants you to be strong again.

And the people could have said, how can we be strong? We've lost our testimony. Our children and our grandchildren have been brought up in Babylonian systems. They haven't learned the law.

They don't even know the language of the Bible. How can we possibly be strong again? And this is what God's servant said to them. Verse 10.

Listen to it. The joy of the Lord is your strength. You might say, well, that's some argument.

Is it not a bit of a circular one? The joy of your Lord? I don't have any joy. The joy of the Lord is your strength. How can the joy of the Lord? I don't have it.

Do you know what the joy of the Lord is? It perhaps would be better read. The joy that is the Lord's is your strength. The joy that is the Lord's, the joy the Lord owns, his joy, not your joy, his joy.

Now, what is his joy? His joy is seeing his people doing what he has asked them to do. Do you remember 3 John verse 1, verse 4, the apostle said, I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth. I have no greater joy.

Tears of repentance are good. Feeding your breast before God is good. Making sacrifices in your life and cutting off that right hand and plucking out that right eye and throwing it away that's caused you to sin.

It's all very good and it's very necessary. But God's word says to obey is better than sacrifice. The joy of the Lord, his own joy in his heart will be yours if you do what he said.

Do we do what he said? When we walk with the Lord in the light of his word, what a glory he sheds on our way. When we do his good will, he abides with us still and with all who will trust and obey. You want to be revived? You need to revive reading this book.

You need to recognize the meaning of this book. You need to respond in obedience to this book completely, 100%. You need to recover the lost truths of this book in your life and in God's people of the assembly.

And you need to rediscover the strengthening power of God's joy when you obey him. And I can tell you, I don't obey him as I ought, but in the times where I'm obeying him the most, there is a buoyancy and even a confidence that is not self-confidence or pride, but to know that before God, you've got a conscience that is clear. Do you know that? If you want revival, we want revival.

We need to get back to the book. We trust you've been blessed and challenged by the message you've just heard. Why not pass it on to a friend or colleague? If you have access to the internet, you may want to visit our website, which is updated weekly at preachtheword.com. There you'll find our audio sermon archives and transcripts of Pastor Lake's messages.

That's www.preachtheword.com. Thank you for listening.

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