

The Challenge of Revival

by Mark D. Partin

The challenge of revival is to see the need, learn to prevail in prayer, and have a passion for the glory of God.

Duration: 33:53

Scripture: Psalm 24:3

Topics: "Revival"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the importance of maintaining lines of separation and pursuing holiness and righteousness in our churches. He emphasizes that there should be clear marks of distinction between believers and the world. The preacher uses the example of Nehemiah, who prayed and fasted for four months before taking action to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. He highlights the need for seeking God's guidance and anointing before embarking on any mission. The sermon also emphasizes the importance of personal purity and right relationship with God in order to be effective agents of revival.

Transcript

Me, my, and mine, and as long as we're all right, everything's okay. But we're not moved with concern when we read the newspapers and we see drugs and alcohol running rampant in our community. We're not moved with concern when we realize that 52 people died in Campbell County last year due to drug abuse and drug overdoses.

It doesn't move us because it's not happened to us. It doesn't move us when there's meth labs four houses up from our church house and a baby was born and destroyed before it even had a chance of life. It doesn't move us to realize all around us in these woods there's been meth labs.

Why? Because we're all right. See, Nehemiah, he never had been to Jerusalem. He never knew the former glory of the temple.

But he's standing at his post and one of his brothers says, when he asked, how is it back home? He says, things are not well and it breaks his heart. What's it going to take to break your heart? We live in one of the most beautiful places in all of America with the trees and the mountains and the valleys and the hills and the lakes. But underneath it, guys, there's an ugly, ugly thing taking place.

And if the church doesn't wake up and stand up, we will give an account to the Holy Father why we slept through it. Now, here's the issue. If you can live without revival in your life, you will.

If you can just keep on going with things as they are and it's nice, you will. Because God will not force anyone. But when you get desperate for God to move in your personal life and you get desperate for God to work in your church and you get desperate for God to move in your community, then we unite.

We don't need a march, guys. We need a movement of God in our midst. Anybody can march.

We need a movement that starts on our knees. And if you're not on your knees united, then you might be part of the problem. Nehemiah chapter 2, beginning with verse 1. And it came to pass in the month of Nisan at the 20th year of King Artaxerxes when wine was before him, that I took the wine and gave it to the king.

Now, I had never been sad in his presence before. Therefore, the king said to me, why is your face sad since you are not sick? This is nothing but sorrow of heart. So I became dreadfully afraid.

Why was he afraid? Because it was a violation of the law to be sad in the king's presence. It's like you or I going into the presence of our president and saying, you just don't know the problems I've got, Mr. President. Now, isn't that pretty ridiculous? With the weight of the country on a man's shoulders and us saying, you just don't know my problems.

That's why it was a violation of the law. That's why Nehemiah had never been sad in his presence before. But you see, Nehemiah, his sadness was not based on earthly things.

His sadness was not based on fleshly things. His sadness was based on the glory of God departing from his people because Ichabod had been written all across his homeland, all across his country. You see, and here's what you have to understand.

What is it that makes you sad? What is it that makes you gloomy? Because you see, whatever it is that makes you sad and gloomy, is it earthly things, is it physical things, is it fleshly things, or is it glory of God things? Because you can tell how drunk you are with the world by what makes you sad. Do you understand that? What disturbs you, what makes you sad, if it's the things of the world that tells you how drunk and how caught up in the world you are and not God. Because if your heart's not breaking for the church in America today and your heart's not breaking for communities that are without the Father, there's something wrong spiritually in your own life.

So I became dreadfully afraid and said to the king, may the king live forever. Why should my face not be sad when the city, the place of my father's tombs lies in waste and its gates are burned with fire? Now you understand the gates, the walls were the lines of demarcation that separated us from the world. Man, those are a blur today in our churches.

There's no marks of separation. There's no pursuit of holiness. There's no pursuit of righteousness.

We just say anything goes, it's all right. If it feels good, do it. Go ahead, sing in the choir, but live in sin.

There's no lines of demarcation. And that's what was bringing his heart down. His burden was for God.

Then the king said to me, what do you request? And so I prayed to the God of heaven. I call that a buckshot prayer. You know what that is? You just go out there and you fire that buckshot up into the sky.

But listen to me, it only works when it's been preceded by four months of agony in prayer. And that's what had gone on in Nehemiah's life. He had sat down, he had wept, he had prayed, he had fasted for four

months.

So he just wasn't acting on a whim here. Like a lot of times, that's what we do. We get ourselves in a bind and we throw up some quick prayer to God.

He has had this prayer already in his spirit for four months. And so when he prays quickly, it is underwritten by four months of prayer. And he said to the king, if it pleases the king, and if your servant has found favor in your sight, that's how you should approach Jesus Christ.

If it pleases you, Father, and I have found favor in your sight. Can you pray that way? Can you pray based on you finding favor in the sight of God? I ask you, send me to Judah, to the city of my father's tombs, that I may rebuild it. Then the king said to me, and the queen also sitting beside him, how long will your journey be? And when will you return? And so it pleased the king to send me, and I set him a time.

Now, he wasn't going to be gone over the weekend. He wasn't gonna be gone for weeks. He was gone for years.

You talk about favor with the king to be gone for years. Furthermore, I said to the king, if it pleases the king, let letters be given to me for the governors of the region beyond the river, that they must permit me to pass through till I come to Judah. And a letter to Asaph, the keeper of the king's forest, that he must give me timber to make beams for the gates of the citadel, which pertains to the temple, for the city wall, and for the house that I will occupy.

Did you catch that one? King, I need provisions. I need you to get me papers that gets me safety, and I need you to get me papers that gets me timber, and I need you to build my own house. Did you get that one? That one just kind of got slid in there.

When you're asking, and you've got favor, ask. And a letter to the Asaph, the keeper of the king's forest, that he must give me timber to make beams for the gates of the citadel, which pertains to the temple, for the city wall, and for the house that I will occupy. For the king granted them to me according to the good hand of my God upon me.

That's the key right there, guys. When you pray, and you have favor, it's all based to the good hand of Almighty God that's upon your life. I'll deal with that momentarily.

Then I went to the governors in the region beyond the river, and they gave me the king's letters. Now the king had sent captains of the army and horsemen with me. And when Sanballat, the Horanite, and Tobiah, the Ammonite officials heard of it, they were deeply disturbed that a man had come to seek the well-being of the children of Israel, God's people.

The enemy always gets deeply disturbed when a man stands up for God and his people. Get ready, because when the enemy gets disturbed, the enemy stands to oppose, but you still stand. And we looked at this last week, and we saw how Nehemiah was minding his own business.

And all of a sudden, this great burden came upon him because he heard word of what was taking place among God's people. And we saw the first thing that has to happen, if you're going to be an agent of revival, if you want to see Campbell County turn back to the father and come to a living relationship and let God pour his spirit out upon this place, you've got to get a vision of the need. You've got to see the things for how they are.

You've got to see the burned down gates. You've got to see the broken down walls. You have got to see it as it is.

You've got to get underneath the surface of things and look at it for what it really is. One of the largest pornography stores in the state of Tennessee is in our county. We acknowledge with great joy that we've now got liquor by the drink, and we now have packaged stores.

We've gone crazy. Acknowledge what it is. There's a problem.

See the need. Secondly, you have to learn to prevail in prayer. That means you have to learn how to pray through.

You just don't show that buckshot prayer up to God, but you know what it is to get alone. You know what it is to hear the word, to listen, to be stunned, to sit down, to weep, to mourn, and to pray for four months and to fast. And the third thing we saw was this.

He had a passion for the glory of God. What's your passion for? You see, here's what happens too many times today in our society. We've got so much stuff that we can do.

Our heart gets divided. And we want to have a passion for God and God's glory, but we also got to be passionate about our kids and all the stuff they want us to be involved in and watch what they're doing. And then we got to have a passion for work.

And then we got to have a passion. You know, it's just divided. We divide our hearts and a divided heart is a diseased heart.

It says you got to be focused. What's your passion for? Where is your time spent? Where is your finances given? What's your passion for? For his glory. If you're to be an agent that God uses, Nehemiah is a layman.

He's not a preacher. He's not a priest. He's a layman.

He's a civil servant that cut bar to the king. What's your passion for? To be an agent of revival, you have to get these things settled. Because if you can live without revival, you will.

And you understand only 7% of the Jews in captivity chose to come back. The other 93% stayed in Babylon. Now, some stayed because of their health, because of their age.

Daniel stayed. So, but you can figure probably 90% stayed back because it was convenient where they were. That's the book of Ezra chapter one.

You'll never get the great multitudes. It's always the remnant. But you'll be amazed at what God does with the remnant because then he's glorified and not man.

You see in Nehemiah chapter two, the challenge of revival, because Nehemiah is a man with a burdened heart, with a broken heart. And what is God looking for today? He's wanting to know, can I trust you with an anointing and a fresh anointing to be an agent? Can I trust you? That's the question. Can he trust you? I don't care your age.

I don't care your gender. Can he trust you to be freshly anointed for his kingdom? See, look what Nehemiah does. He registers a request.

We saw what he did. He asked the king nine times throughout this book, you'll find Nehemiah praying. And he didn't say, God, do something.

I've prayed that prayer a few times. Have you? God, do something. Nehemiah never said that.

You want Nehemiah said? He said, use me. Use me. How was Moses when God started using him? How? 80.

I think that covers most of us, doesn't it? See, use me, God. Here I am. Burden me so great.

If I can't even get up and walk, I know how to intercede and pray. And I lift up my preacher to you every day. And I lift up my Sunday school teacher to you every day.

And I lift up those who are fighting on the battlefield of this community for righteousness and truth every day. And I intercede for lost people. I can be, I can intercede.

I can pray. That's what God says, raise me up. There was this conviction in his heart.

And you'll be amazed at the people today that live in this world without any convictions at all about truth, any convictions at all about righteousness. It's just, let's go along to get along. And so that's why he was sad.

That's why his heart was breaking. And he begins to register to God what his need was. He said, send me.

He really said, interrupt my life. Have you prayed, God, interrupt my life? Or do you think I've got too much going on right now to be interrupted? I think most of us think we've got too much going on. But you got to come to that place and say, God, interrupt my life.

If you're going to say, use me. You're going to have to say, God, affect my family. Let me tell you something.

You sell out to Jesus Christ, your family will not understand. They won't. They want you to just do what you've always been doing.

But they're not going to understand when you sell out to Christ. It will affect your family. When you say, God, use me, you're saying, God, interrupt me.

God, you're going to affect my family. And then you've got to go to a place of ruins. You remember Ezekiel? Ezekiel was a man of God.

And God took him to the middle of death. He took him to a middle of valley of dry sun bleached bones. You see, if you want to be used by God, realize he will take you to ruins.

He will take you to a valley of sun bleached bones. Why? Because that's where God is needed to move in power to give resurrection life. And he was going to risk his job.

And he was going to risk his stuff. But he said, God, use me. See, that's what the prayer means.

I will risk myself for the kingdom. And God commissioned him. And Nehemiah was a layman.

He wasn't a preacher, prophet, priest. He was a layman. One of the greatest revivals that ever took place in America was in 1858.

Joseph Lamphere, he was a layman. It is known as the prayer revival. And God put it on his heart to begin establishing a time of prayer in the community.

I believe it was in New York City. And I'm really sure that it's really, really close to where the Twin Towers were. It's close.

I've got an old map. I don't know for certain, but I'm just telling you. He shows up for prayer.

He advertises, puts out flyers. 1858, mind you, a layman. He sits there.

It's at noon. Three people show up. Well, that was a really good one.

Next week, six people show up. Very organized, very structured. You write down your prayer request.

Here's how it goes. Before it ended, millions across America were praying. It went all across to the other side of the ocean because a layman heard God, obeyed God.

Even when nobody else showed up, he still was faithful. And they started showing up. And they started exceeding the building capacity.

And the revival slipped across America because of a layman burdened to pray at lunchtime. Nehemiah's a layman. What are you? You're a layman.

But God can commission you. God can use you mightily. Look how Nehemiah went.

He went with the king's power in verse 7. You read that. He had letters. That was power.

He had provision, verse 8. He had protection, verse 9. That was an army going with him. What are you seeking from God? Lord, I need my electric bill paid. My gas bill's coming due.

My car payment's coming. What are you seeking from God about the kingdom? If you've got favor with the father, your heart should be beating for his glory and his honor. Saying, God, I need your power to go forth and stand.

I need your provision to do what you're calling me to do. I need, God, your protection. He sent an army of men with him.

He had favor. Do you have favor with God? Well, how do I know if I got favor? Then you don't. If you don't know it, then you don't.

You understand it by the relationship you have with the father. You understand by the abiding principles that are in your life if you live under favor. So imagine, whose power are you living out of? Whose resources are you living out of? Are you living out of yours, or are you living out of the father's? Have you said, God, use me, and God, I'll adjust my life.

Whatever you would have me to do, whatever you'd have me to be. Second thing, Nehemiah, he reviewed the ruins. Now, that's chapter 2, verse 11 to 16.

So let's read that together now. So I came to Jerusalem, and I was there three days. And then I arose in the night, and a few men with me.

And I told no one what my God had put in my heart to do at Jerusalem. Now, get the picture. Here it is, Jerusalem.

It's lying in ruins. All of a sudden, an army of men show up with stuff. And they don't tell nobody for three days what's going on.

It'd be like tractor trailers rolling into Campbell County. They pitch their tent in the middle of the community, but they never tell nobody what's going on. What do you think that's done? It's piqued interest, right? People get kind of curious, right? They don't show up with a big banner saying, oh, here's what we're going to do.

For three days, he sits in his tent. What's he doing? He's seeking God. He's seeking the face of God, the anointing of God.

Why? Because that's what's brought him all this way to know God's plan to be used as an agent of revival for his people. He prays, and he seeks God. And then in the middle of the night, he gets up.

Listen to me. How many times this week has God woke you up in the middle of the night? Because when God's wanting to move in somebody's life and in a place, he always wakes somebody up in the middle of the night. And you take a long journey into the darkness, and you review the ruins that are all around you, and you pour yourself out to the Father saying, oh, God, oh, God, oh, Father, show me, God, what I'm to be about.

Use me, God, for whatever you would say. You get up in the night, and you seek Him. Has that happened to you? And he burns your heart where you don't even sleep.

And then you get up, and you go through it. And at one spot, he dismounts. I went out by night through the valley gate to the serpent well, the refuge gate, and viewed the walls of Jerusalem, which were broken down, and its gates, which were burned with fire.

There was no line of demarcation. And then I went to the fountain gate to the king's pool, but there was no room for the animal under me to pass so much junk. And so I went up by the night, by the valley, and I viewed the wall.

And then I turned back and entered by the valley gate, and so returned. And the officials did not know where I had gone or what I had done. I had not yet told the Jews, the priests, the nobles, the officials, or the others who did the work.

He heard it. And now he was viewing it for himself, just to see how bad things were. Let me read you from the book Catch the Wind.

When God moved in the Hibertes Islands in 1948, 1952. Here's how it started. The churches of Lewis had become deeply concerned about the spiritual state of the churches, especially they were alarmed at the lack of young people who attended church.

There was not one single young person who attended church at Barbus, and only a few at the other churches. In high school, the pupils were speaking of conversion as the plague, something from which to keep away at all costs. The presbytery affectionately pled with their people, especially with the youth of the church, to take these matters to heart and to make serious inquiry as to what must be the end.

Should there be no repentance, and they should call upon every individual as before God to examine his or her life in light of that responsibility which pertains to us all, that happily in the divine mercy we may be visited with a spirit of repentance and may turn again unto the Lord, whom we have so grieved with our iniquity and waywardness, especially would they warn their young people of the devil's man traps, the cinema, and the public houses. That was the issue, the concern. Our young people need to taste the glory of God because the next generation needs to have a generation that knows him.

And there's a small percentage of our young people that have a heart for God. Of 1,500 students in Campbell County, they estimate there's probably 200 that are Christians. Do we need to pray and be concerned about our young people? Absolutely right.

1,300 kids in Campbell County are being raised by grandparents because the parents are on drugs or alcohol and cannot raise or will not raise their own children. And that does not take into account those in the high school who pretty much raise themselves staying with friend to friend to friend. The minister of the Church of Barber at that time was Reverend James Murray McKay and he read this declaration to his congregation on a Sunday.

And during the next week, he took the declaration to the home of two elderly sisters who were not able to attend church. And he read this declaration to two sisters, Peggy and Christine Smith. Peggy was 84 years of age and blind.

Christine was 82 years of age and suffered with severe arthritis. The Smith sisters lived south of the church next door to the police station in Barvis. God is at work in the shadows.

And when the minister read this declaration to the Smith sisters, they committed themselves to pray about this matter. They spoke Gaelic, so their prayers went before the Lord in their native language. And in prayer, God gave to Peggy Smith a vision.

And she saw the church of her father, the Barvis Church, filled with people, packed with young people. And there came to both of these sisters the promise of God. I will pour out water upon him that is thirsty and floods upon the dry ground.

Isaiah 44, 3. That was to one person. I will pour water upon him. Be the hymn.

Get thirsty. The sisters went for their minister, Reverend James Murray McKay. And Peggy told him of her vision.

And the minister asked, what do you think we ought to do? And Peggy replied, what? Give yourselves to prayer. Give yourselves to waiting on God. Get your elders together, your deacons together.

Spend at least two nights a week waiting on God in prayer. And if you would do that on the other end of the parish, my sister and I will get down on our knees here in our home from 10 at night until 2 or 3 in the morning. And one was crippled.

And for months, this minister and six of his men met in a small barn on the north side of the parish. And Peggy and Christine Smith met in their home on the south side of the parish. And they prayed and they waited on God.

Praying two nights a week from 10 until 2 or 3 in the morning. And this continued for three months and nothing happened. So many times we quit because we don't know God's working in the shadows.

But one night while waiting on God in a little barn, one of the men, Kenneth McDonald, rose to his feet and he opened his Bible and he read part of Psalm 24. Who shall ascend to the hill of God? Who shall stand in his holy place? He that has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not lifted up his soul into vanity nor sworn deceitfully, he shall receive the blessing of the Lord. And then he closed his Bible and he addressed his minister and the other elders and men in the barn.

He said, it seems to me just so much humble to be waiting as we are waiting and praying as we are praying if we ourselves are not rightly related to God. And then he cried and lifted both hands toward heaven crying out, Oh God, are my hands clean? Is my heart pure? And then he fell on his knees in a straw. And in a moment he fell into a trance, unconscious.

And suddenly the fire of God fell in that barn. When did the last time you raised your hands to heaven and said, God, are my hands clean? Is my heart pure? That's why we have no move of God. When was the last time you prayed from 10 until 2 a.m with arthritic bones on your knees, blind? That's why we have no move of God.

Someone said this week, not referencing me, I don't think, but they said, I've had two people from two different churches say the preacher's preaching to the choir and he needs to be preaching on the streets. The problem's not on the streets. The problem's in the pew.

The church in America is asleep and we don't pray and we don't cry out for the lostness of our community, for our kids. 30 of hardened hands, external and internal. And when this revival fire fell there in Barba, so it became streaming, no-call meeting, they started showing up.

Nehemiah waited on God. That's the hardest thing to do, isn't it? Pray and wait, pray and wait. He waited on God.

He was sure he was led by the Holy Spirit. That's what you've got to be, is sure you're led by the Holy Spirit. Sure you're speaking by the prompting of the Holy Spirit.

You can't do this without discernment. He was persistent and he was very alert to what was going on. He saw things as they were.

He got alone with the Father. He got alone with the Word and he evaluated his life in light of what God had showed him. How long has it been since you've got alone with the Word of God and you evaluate your life based on this Word, based on pure hands and a pure heart, internally, externally.

We've got strained relationships and we think that's all right. We rob God. We don't want to tithe.

We think that's all right. We lack love. We're filled with bitterness.

We're quick to speak. He was an agent of revival and did all this stuff privately because he didn't want to be the center of attention. He didn't look at 17 to 18 or 20.

He had to remove the reproach. Then I said to them, you see the distress we're in? How Jerusalem lies waste and its gates are burned with fire. Come let us build a wall of Jerusalem that we may no longer be a reproach.

Now, I want you to notice something. He's not saying, you guys have sure messed this up. I can't believe you did what you did.

He said, we. He's identifying with the people. There ain't no place to blame.

He's not saying, you should have done this. If I'd have been here, it would have been different. You know, get off your high horse.

No blaming. He's identified. And I told them of the hand of my God, which had been good upon me.

And also the king's word that he had spoken to me so that they said, let us arise and build. And then they set their hands to do this good work. He showed them the seriousness of the problem.

He identified with the people and then he gave his testimony. Guys, there's power in testimony. There's power in a personal testimony, because what you see in verse eight and in verse 18, the good hand of my God upon me.

Do you know the good hand of God upon you? Do you know God's favor? What's that mean? You look in Ezekiel chapter one, you find the same reference. Ezekiel one, the word of the Lord came expressly to Ezekiel, the priest, the son of Buzzi, verse three, in the land of the Chaldeans, by the river Kabar. And the hand of the Lord was upon him there.

You know what it means to have the hand of God on you? It means you've been captured. You read the book of Ezekiel that says, I'm captured by the Assyrians. I've been captured by my lover.

I've been captured by my enemy. I've been captured by my pursuer. But you look at Ezekiel.

He said, I am captured by my God. And you've got to yield yourself and surrender yourself unto the father before he'll ever capture you and place his good hand upon your life. But when the good hand of God is upon your life, it flows forth and it's evidence because you see, you know, his power, you know, his authority, you know him.

What's captured you? Your family, your friends, your career, greed. And for God, where it stops you and you sit down and you weep and you pray over the condition that we find ourselves in as a people of God, as a community. As long as we pursue the flesh and the approval and the opinions of men, we will never be captured by God.

And then look at the response. He said, let us arise and build. And they said, they set their hands to do this good work.

Let us arrive. There's cooperation, there's unity, there's one that's a vision, there's one that's a purpose. There's no split.

Let me ask you, sow seeds of discord, you sow seeds of harmony. You've got to be unified. And then you look at verse 19.

Then said, when Sanballat, the poor knight and to buy the Ammonite official and Geshem, the Arab heard of it, they laughed at us and they despised us. If you think the world's going to be your friend, you've missed it. They will laugh and they will despise you.

And if you've got this people pleasing problem going on in your life, that you want everybody to like you, you best start worrying about Jesus Christ liking you. Now he loves you, but I'd say there's a few times he may not like us. You can't be an agent of revival and live to please people.

You live to please God. So I answered them and I said to them, the God of heaven himself will prosper us. Therefore, we as servants will arise and build, but you have no heritage or right or memorial in Jerusalem.

God's looking for a man to stand in the game. He's not looking for a committee. He's not looking for a denomination.

He's looking for one man to say, here I am. I'll stand. It all starts with one.

Will you be one? Will you say, God, let me see the need to where it breaks and burdens my heart. Teach me to prevail in prayer and give me a passion for your glory. And father, let me review the ruins of the situation.

Awake me in the middle of the night, father. And let me learn how to seek you. God use me.

Bow your heads and close your eyes just for a moment.

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