

Revival (Part 1)

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Preacher: Lee Roberts

[0:00] In last week's study, Nehemiah 6.15 recorded a significant accomplishment for the people of Jerusalem.

! That accomplishment had an impact on all of the surrounding nations. So let's look at 6.15 and 16 for some review. They say, So the wall was finished on the 25th day of Elul in 52 days, and it happened, when all our enemies heard of it, and all the nations around us saw these things, that they were very disheartened in their own eyes, for they perceived that this work was done by our God.

One of the outcomes of this achievement was a great reversal of affairs. In other words, Israel's enemies had tried to make Israel afraid, but instead it was now the enemies who became afraid. Notice to whom Nehemiah gave the credit, though. Nehemiah said, For they perceived that this work was done by our God. He also said that the enemies were very disheartened in their own eyes because they perceived that this work was done by God.

And as we said last week, human hands built the wall, but concurrently, God also built the wall. Men and women did it, and God did it at the same time.

[1:24] So, like we talked about last week, this is really the grammar of providence. The same event viewed from different perspectives can be explained in very different ways. We talked about how we can still see that today because, for example, we work out our salvation with fear and trembling because God works in us to do His will and His good pleasure.

So, God works it in and we work it out. Last week, we also covered all except the last verse of chapter 7. Chapter 7 is a transitional chapter.

That's because the completion of the walls changed the emphasis of Nehemiah's work. The rebuilding of the walls was essential for Jerusalem to become a strong city again.

But once the walls were completed, Jerusalem needed to have attention directed toward the administration of the city. Jerusalem needed to be organized and set up like a well-governed city should be.

The first thing we saw Nehemiah do was to appoint others to help him lead. In the early verses of chapter 7, Nehemiah appointed civil and military leaders for the city.

[2:33] He also gave them instructions about how the city should be safeguarded. With his leadership team in place, Nehemiah set out to determine how many people were in the city. The bulk of chapter 7 recapped an earlier census that Ezra did.

Nehemiah used that census as the basis for counting the current population. And Nehemiah 7.4 confirmed that very few people lived in the city. Nehemiah 7.4 says, Now the city was large and spacious, but the people in it were few, and the houses were not rebuilt.

When we get to chapter 11 in a few weeks, we'll see an emphasis on documenting and increasing the population again. But chapters 8 through 10 have a different focus.

And for the next three chapters in Nehemiah, the emphasis will be on the spiritual needs of the people. We're going to see a change because Ezra, not Nehemiah, will become the dominant character.

In fact, from here on out, Nehemiah's name will only appear four more times in the rest of the book. Each time it comes up, it'll be in the third person, just to indicate that he was still governor at the time.

[3:43] But it will be quoting from an official record more than talking about what he did. Nehemiah's work continues, but he's no longer in the spotlight. So what happens in the next chapters of Nehemiah is a work of reformation and revival.

God steps into the situation, and in the space of a few days, he brings about a renewal of enthusiastic worship and consecrated obedience. Jerusalem really hadn't seen anything like that for over 200 years.

The last time they had anything like that was when Josiah was the king in the late 7th century BC. So they'd gone through several years of exile, and Jerusalem had languished almost to the point of extinction.

What worship happened there was in private gatherings, and no doubt the people longed for something better. Following the return of the exiles under Zerubbabel and the rebuilding of the temple, we had some attempts to restore biblical worship in the city, but they actually had languished.

And for the better part of seven years, even under the leadership of Ezra and his preaching ministry, Jerusalem still hadn't had any revival of religious enthusiasm.

[4:57] That'll change, though, as we get to this chapter. Up to this point, Nehemiah has been writing in the first person, but with the start of chapter 8, this changes.

The narrative is going to shift to the third person, and the first person narration doesn't resume until the dedication of the walls is talked about in Nehemiah 12.17.

We have several weeks to go before we'll get to that part of the book. So this seems to mean that Nehemiah was aware that the second stage of the work, even though it was envisioned by him, was not his concern alone.

He cared about the nation's spiritual renewal, but he knew that this was a matter to be led by Ezra and not him, because Ezra was the spiritual head of the people. So the leadership and the movement for renewal did pass to Ezra, but we know that Nehemiah still was very much involved. Tonight we are going to cover the last verse of chapter 7, and we'll start chapter 8. Even though we'll save the end of chapter 8 for next week, let's go ahead and read 7.73 to 8.18 now.

[6:03] We'll read all of chapter 8 as a whole, but we'll only cover the first eight verses. Starting with 7.73, it says, So the priest, the Levites, the gatekeepers, the singers, some of the people, the Nethanim, and all Israel dwelt in their cities.

When the seven-month came, the children of Israel were in their cities. Now all the people gathered together as one man in the open square that was in front of the water gate, and they told Ezra the scribe to bring the law of the book of Moses, which the Lord had commanded Israel.

So Ezra the priest brought the law before the assembly of men and women, and all who could hear with understanding, on the first day of the seventh month. Then he read from it in the open square that was in front of the water gate, from morning until midday, before the men and women, and those who could understand, and the ears of all the people were attentive to the book of the law.

So Ezra the scribe stood on a platform of wood, which they had made for the purpose, and beside him, at his right hand, stood Mattitiah, Shema, Ananiah, Arijah, Hilkiyah, and Maseah, and at his left hand, Padaiah, Mishael, Malkijah, Hashem, Hashbadanah, Zechariah, and Meshulam.

And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was standing above all the people, and when he opened it, all the people stood up, and Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God.

[7:33] Then all the people answered, Amen, Amen, while lifting their hands, and they bowed their heads and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground. Also Jeshua, Bani, Shari'biah, Jamin, Akab, Shevathiah, Hodijah, Messiah, Khalida, Azariah, Jehozabad, Hanan, Paliah, and the Levites helped the people to understand the law, and the people stood in their place.

So they read distinctly from the book in the law of God, and they gave the sense and helped them to understand the reading. And Nehemiah, who was the governor, Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people, said to all the people, This day is holy to the Lord your God, do not mourn nor weep.

For all the people wept when they heard the words of the law. Then he said to them, Go your way, eat the fat, drink the sweet, and send portions to those for whom nothing is prepared.

For this day is holy to our Lord, do not sorrow, for the joy of the Lord is your strength. So the Levites quieted all the people, saying, Be still, for the day is holy.

Do not be grieved. And all the people went their way to eat and drink, to send portions, and to rejoice greatly, because they understood the words that were declared to them. Now on the second day, the heads of the fathers' houses of all the people with the priests and Levites were gathered to Ezra the scribe in order to understand the words of the law.

[9:07] And they found written in the law which the Lord had commanded by Moses that the children of Israel shall dwell in booths during the feast of the seven month, and that they should announce and proclaim in all their cities and in Jerusalem, saying, Go out to the mountain and bring olive branches, branches of oil trees, myrtle branches, palm branches, and branches of leafy trees to make booths as it is written.

Then the people went out and brought them and made themselves booths, each one on the roof of his house, or in the courtyards, or the courts of the house of God, and in the open square of the water gate, and in the open square of the gate of Ephraim.

So the whole assembly of those who had returned from captivity made booths and sat under the booths, for since the days of Joshua the son of Nun, until that day the children of Israel had not done so.

And there was very great gladness. Also day by day, from the first day until the last day, he read from the book of the law of God, and they kept the feast seven days, and on the eighth day there was a sacred assembly, according to the prescribed manner.

We'll cover Nehemiah 7.73 as part of the introduction. It provides necessary background for tonight's passage. And Nehemiah 7.73 says, So the priest, the Levites, the gatekeepers, the singers, some of the people, the Nethanim, and all Israel dwelt in their cities.

[10:34] When the seventh month came, the children of Israel were in their cities. With the wall now finished, the workers from outside Jerusalem returned to their own homes until the first day of the seventh month.

To understand the importance of the seventh month to the Israelites, we're going to spend quite a bit of time tonight looking at the background of it in Leviticus and Deuteronomy. So keep your finger in Nehemiah 8, but go ahead and flip over to Leviticus chapter 23, and we'll look at verses 23 through 43.

So again, that's Leviticus chapter 23, verses 23 to 43. As we read those verses, you'll start to see the importance of the seventh month to the Jews.

So Leviticus 23, 23 and following says, Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, Speak to the children of Israel, saying, In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall have a Sabbath rest, a memorial, a blowing of trumpets, a holy convocation.

You shall do no customary work on it, and you shall offer an offering made by fire to the Lord. And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, Also, the tenth day of the seventh month shall be the day of atonement.

[11:55] It shall be a holy convocation for you. You shall afflict your souls and offer an offering made by fire to the Lord. And you shall do no work on that same day, for it is the day of atonement, to make atonement for you before the Lord your God.

For any person who is not afflicted in soul on that same day shall be cut off from his people. And any person who does any work on that same day, that person I will destroy from among his people. You shall do no manner of work. It shall be a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings. It shall be to you a Sabbath of solemn rest, and you shall afflict your souls.

On the ninth day of the month at evening, from evening to evening, you shall celebrate your Sabbath. Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, Speak to the children of Israel, saying, The fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be the feast of tabernacles for seven days to the Lord.

On the first day, there shall be a holy convocation. You shall do no customary work on it. For seven days, you shall offer an offering made by fire to the Lord. On the eighth day, you shall have a holy convocation, and you shall offer an offering made by fire to the Lord.

[13:08] It is a sacred assembly, and you shall do no customary work on it. These are the feasts of the Lord, which you shall proclaim to the holy convocations, to offer an offering made by fire to the Lord, a burnt offering, and a grain offering, a sacrifice, and drink offerings, everything on its day.

Besides the Sabbaths of the Lord, besides your gifts, besides all your vows, and besides all your freewill offerings which you give to the Lord. Also on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the fruit of the land, you shall keep the feast of the Lord for seven days.

On the first day, there shall be a Sabbath rest, and on the eighth day, a Sabbath rest. And you shall take for yourselves on the first day the fruit of beautiful trees, branches of palm trees, the boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook.

And you shall rejoice before the Lord your God for seven days. You shall keep it as a feast to the Lord for seven days in the year. It shall be a statute forever in your generations.

You shall celebrate it in the seventh month. You shall dwell in boughs for seven days. All who are native Israelites shall dwell in boughs, that your generations may know that I made the children of Israel dwell in boughs when I brought them out of the land of Egypt.

[14:27] I am the Lord your God. So are you starting to get a sense that the seventh month for Israel is a very important month? You see there's a lot of feasts and special celebrations going on during that time.

And there's even more background we need to look at. Let's go ahead and look at Deuteronomy 31, and this is a much shorter passage. This is just Deuteronomy 31, verses 10 through 13.

We've seen that the Feast of Booths, also known as the Feast of Tabernacles, takes place during the seventh month. In Deuteronomy 31, 10 through 13, we learn that some Feasts of Tabernacles were more important than others.

So here are Deuteronomy 31, 10 through 13. And Moses commanded them, saying, at the end of every seven years, at the appointed time in the year of release, at the Feast of Tabernacles, when all Israel comes to appear before the Lord your God in the place which he chooses, you shall read this law before all Israel in their hearing.

Gather the people together, men and women and little ones, and the stranger who is within your gates, that they may hear and that they may learn to fear the Lord your God and carefully observe all the words of this law, and that their children who have not known it may hear and learn to fear the Lord your God as long as you live in the land which you crossed the Jordan to possess.

[15:51] So that's a lot of the background that will explain what we'll see going on in Chapter 8. So as we flip back over to Chapter 8 now, we're going to break the chapter into three parts.

We'll cover the first part this week, then next week we'll come back to Chapter 8 and cover the last two parts. I'm not going to leave you with the complete cliffhanger, though. We'll talk about what we'll see next week and give you a preview of what's coming up before we leave tonight.

That's because the three parts sometimes overlap with each other. But the first part of Chapter 8 covers verses 1 through 8, and in this section we see the reason for the revival.

So we'll see the reason for the revival tonight. So here are verses 1 through 8 again. They say, Now all the people gathered together as one man in the open square that was in front of the water gate. And they told Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses which the Lord had commanded Israel. So Ezra the priest brought the law before the assembly of men and women and all who could hear with understanding on the first day of the seventh month.

[17:08] Then he read from it in the open square that was in front of the water gate from morning until midday before the men and women and those who could understand. And the ears of all the people were attuned to the book of the law.

So Ezra the scribe stood on a platform of wood which they made for the purpose. And beside him at his right hand stood Mattitiah, Shema, Aniah, Uriah, Hilkiah, and Messiah and at his left hand Padaiah, Mishael, Malchijah, Hashem, Hashpadana, Zechariah, and Meshulam.

And Ezra opened the book inside of all the people for he was standing above all the people and when he opened it all the people stood up and Ezra blessed the Lord the great God.

Then all the people answered Amen, Amen while lifting up their hands and they bowed their heads and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground. Also, Geshua, Benai, Shariah, Jaman, Akab, Shabbatiah, Hodijah, Messiah, Helida, Hazariah, Josabed, Hanun, Paliah, and the Levites helped the people to understand the law and the people stood in their place so they read distinctly from the book in the law of God and they gave the sense and helped them to understand the reading.

So we've touched on it already but let's set the scene again. For the Jews it's the first day of Tishri which is the seventh month of the Jewish calendar.

[18:37] It's the year 445 BC and to put it in terms that we can understand better that day in the Jewish calendar corresponds to late September by our calendar.

So it's turning toward early fall there. The construction project on the wall had just been completed a few days before. Now seemingly without warning or preamble the people come back into the city and they gather in the square before the water gate.

Women and children are among them so meeting at the temple would have been difficult given the numbers involved. Some estimates say that between 30,000 and 50,000 people have gathered here in front of the water gate.

So that would be as much or more than the city of Bartlesville and even Dewey put together if it's on the high side of that estimate. And of course another reason why they probably didn't meet at the temple is there were some parts of the temple that women and children weren't permitted to enter so if everybody was going to participate they needed to make sure to have it in a public place. Whose idea do you think it was that they should meet in this way? Okay. Actually the answer probably is not a who it's more of a what.

[19:57] Somebody had actually studied the scriptures and realized that the first day of the seventh month was time for the Feast of Trumpets which also began the Feast of Tabernacles.

And as we saw from the background passages we read on those days they were required to assemble for worship. And even if everybody else had forgotten that Ezra the priest would certainly remember.

So the people gather in Jerusalem to hear the law of God read and explain to them many had camped out in Jerusalem during the construction project but they returned home when it was completed.

Only days later though all of them are back in the city men, women, and children this time. It all looked spontaneous but it undoubtedly had been planned. We see that a special pulpit has even been made for the occasion.

Knowing Nehemiah he probably said something like this after the wall building was complete. He probably said you all deserve some time off but be sure to be back here on the first of the month and bring the women and children with you for a Bible conference because the law of God requires it.

[21:05] So chances are Nehemiah has been planning this occasion from the start. He knew that what Jerusalem needed after seven decades of disappointing progress was some intensive Bible instructions.

By this time the Jews were ignorant of large sections of the Bible particularly the first five books of the Old Testament in particular and that showed if they were to grow spiritually and be men and women that God meant for them to be they will need to study the scriptures and learn what God requires of them.

So listen to that last sentence again. If they are to grow spiritually and to be the men and women of God that they are meant to be they will need to study the scriptures and learn what God requires of them.

Does the same thing apply to us today? Every true progress in gospel awakening is conditioned by a renewed and deepened study of the scriptures.

So when we talk about the reason for the revival in these verses the reason for the revival is that renewed and deepened study of the scripture. Many people including Christian people today fail to understand the place and importance of the Bible in their daily lives.

[22:19] They're spiritually ignorant of what God has provided for him or for them in the Bible and they don't realize that true spiritual renewal comes only when individuals turn from their lack of effort and moral apathy and turn to God in repentance and faith.

So revival involves submission to the authority of the scriptures and how this may become part of our experience is illustrated for us in Nehemiah chapter 8 so that's why we'll spend a couple of weeks looking at this chapter.

Verse 1 is the first time that Ezra is mentioned in the book of Nehemiah. Notice that the people instructed Ezra to get the book of the law which Ezra had no doubt brought to Jerusalem as much as 13 years before.

Up until this time what had recently been confined into private study among learned men was now made public for everybody. To understand the significance of the people's request here we need to put ourselves in their place.

Learning what the scriptures said was a difficult process and it was far more difficult than we might imagine from our vantage point today. The scriptures were written in Hebrew but most Jews had adopted the official administrative language of the conquering empire and that was Aramaic.

[23:39] So we did have large sections of the book of Ezra and Daniel that were written in Aramaic but largely the Old Testament was written in Hebrew. So it was therefore necessary for the

scriptures to be translated into Aramaic from their Hebrew original.

When you add to that the fact that scriptures at this point were confined to just a few copies on scrolls it made it harder for people to study them on their own. You couldn't just carry the scrolls around like what we carry in the Bible today.

They certainly didn't have a copy on their smartphone that they could just pull out and take a look at them either. You know most of us today have multiple copies and translations of the Bible in our houses and we may even have it in the electronic format like what I mentioned before.

So we can move from one section of scripture to another with relative ease but the scrolls were cumbersome and so it made it impossible to jump from one portion of scripture to another.

So having someone read scripture to the people and explain it was essential. The people who were going to explain the scripture to the gathering were Ezra and his helpers. So based upon verse 3 if Ezra were here tonight he would be disappointed that we're breaking just one chapter into multiple parts.

[24:56] Notice how long Ezra read the law. Verse 3 says that Ezra read from morning until midday so that's approximately six hours or more. I thought about titling tonight one long sermon but I was afraid that might scare you off when you saw the title on the handout so we went a little more routine with the title there.

Something else in verse 3 is more surprising even than the length of Ezra's sermon because we've all known preachers who we thought could go on for at least six hours given the opportunity but the surprising part of verse 3 comes at the end of the verse.

It says that Ezra read the law before the men and women and those who could understand and the ears of all the people were attentive to the book of the law. So men, women, and children that's what's meant by the phrase and all those who could understand paid attention for at least six hours. Not only did they pay attention but verse 5 tells us that they stood up for the entire time. Can you imagine standing for a six hour church service?

We won't go quite that long this weekend I'm sure but if we do go a little long you can think about this one and realize just how much shorter it really was. I think we can both stand up and raise your hand.

[26:17] I think all you do is there. According to verse 4 where was Ezra during this service? He stood on a platform made for the purpose of reading the word and beside him stood 13 other people.

I'm not going to try to read their names again here. This platform was the prototype pulpit but it may have originated during the Babylonian exile along with the beginnings of the synagogue.

Some think the 13 other men named here were priests but other references in Nehemiah specify when people are priests and Levites so these other men may simply have been just influential lay leaders in the community.

Regardless of who they were though these men stood with Ezra to show agreement with what he was telling the people. Verses 5 through 8 give us the order of service.

In verse 5 we see Ezra open the book of the law. Ezra prayed before he read from it and that's what's meant by the opening phrase of verse 6 where it says and Ezra blessed the Lord the great God.

[27:25] So whenever you see somebody blessing the Lord that's a sign that that was a prayer. The actual words of Ezra's prayer are missing from the text. We can though see two effects of the prayer.

First it established the sense among the people that what was to follow the reading of the law was no civil ordinary matter. Instead it was something that had to do with God.

even though the people were more ignorant of the law than what they used to be it was still recognized as divine authority. The people knew that the law was from God and it was to be revered as such.

Ezra acknowledged this in his prayer and he reminded the people of it when he began reading the Old Testament. Second Ezra's prayer awakened the people's anticipation of what God might do among them.

that's something that prayer should always do because prayer is approaching God and asking things of and receiving things from God. Of course we know it's also praise, confession, and thanksgiving.

[28:28] We'll see that these elements are present in this chapter too but it's also asking and expecting God to do something and certainly the people were correct to be in an expectant frame of mind on this occasion.

And the last part of verse 6 summarizes these effects of Ezra's prayer. The end of verse 6 says then all the people answered Amen, Amen while lifting their hands and they bowed their heads and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground.

So the people responding by saying Amen which means so be it and Amen while lifting up their hands and standing with their arms lifted above their heads and their hands turned heavenward then has traditionally been the Jewish way of saying Lord I'm empty handed I have nothing everything that I need comes from you so they're just acknowledging there that they're completely dependent upon God.

After they did that we see that the people bowed and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground as they bowed and worshipped before the Lord they imply by their actions their submission to his authority.

When the prayer is over Ezra unrolls the scroll and he reads from the law to the men women and children this is pretty significant too don't gloss over that point other religious institutions and other religions regard women and children as non-entities especially back in that day but even today really only Judaism and Christianity are the religions that treat women and children with respect and we see back in that day Ezra was already setting the tone by making sure that women and children were included.

[30:11] So after reading the scripture the next thing on the order of service was explaining what had just been read and verse 7 documents several people in the Levites who were with Ezra and if you look at verse 8 verse 8 says so they read distinctly from the book in the law of God and they gave the sense and helped them to understand the reading.

The Levites had the job of making sure the people knew what was being said. they were helping bridge the cultural gap between the last 70 years in Babylonia and what was found in scripture. That really couldn't have been easy because although God's word is authoritative for life and faith for everybody who knows God it frequently takes hard work to understand the message of God especially when it was originally written in a foreign language in a distant time and place.

So does that sound familiar? The word of God that we have was written in foreign languages to us at a distant time and place.

So the same is true today and that's why we need people who devote their time to explaining the scripture to us. Explanation of scripture doesn't have the same authority as the word of God itself but it's important because the Bible is meant not only to be heard and revered but it also is to be understood assimilated and obeyed.

[31:42] Let's recap the order of service that we've just seen in the first eight verses. First Ezra prayed then he read the word then he explained the word of course Ezra was only able to explain the word because he previously took time to study it and understand it himself but when you think about somebody praying and then reading the word and then explaining the word does that order of service sound familiar to you?

It should look very familiar to what you see on our bulletins for Sunday mornings. It's the same pattern that we and any Bible centered church still uses today.

So just as in Ezra's day reading the word and explaining the word are the focus of true worship services. Neither Highland Park nor any other church came up with that approach on our own. You can see from this that the approach comes straight from the Bible. That's the reason for the prominence of sermons in true Christian worship. Other things are valuable.

We know that liturgical elements can be quite beautiful. Topical sermons can be relevant and moving but what God has promised to bless and what he has used most often to bring blessings is the strict teaching and preaching of his word.

[33:00] pastor. We providentially arrived at this section of Nehemiah chapter 8 on the Wednesday before we have our prospective pastor coming in view of a call. Like Ezra, our next pastor will read the scripture and explain the scripture so that we can understand and live it.

We know that God has blessed this church with a long line of pastors who followed the same approach. Just as we should be sad when one pastor gets called to another area of ministry, we should be excited about the next pastor to come because that's a sign that God is still blessing his

people by sending somebody to explain the word.

And remember what we just said, what God has promised to bless and what he has used most often to bring the blessing is the strict teaching and preaching of his word. So the first eight verses of chapter 8 have shown us the reason for the revival.

The reason is that the people have renewed their effort to study God's word. Here comes the preview for next week. Next week we'll finish chapter 8 by looking at the requirement for the revival and the results of the revival.

We actually have already seen the requirement for the revival. The requirement for the revival is that the people understand God's word. When people understand God's word, then that leads to results.

[34 : 24] And the results of the revival are that they obey the word and that they rejoice because of God's word. If you have doubts about that, come back next week and then we'll look at verses like 8-12.

And Nehemiah 8-12 says, and all the people went their way to eat and drink, to send portions and rejoice greatly. And why does it say they rejoice greatly? It says they rejoice because they understood the words that were declared to them.

The experience of the Jews highlights one of the reasons why we need continuously to expose ourselves to the teaching of God's word. So many new ideas flow through our minds each day that many important truths can be forgotten.

If we forget God's absolutes, then we lack the discernment to face different kinds of situations that we go through every day. But when we continuously expose ourselves to the teaching of the word, we're reminded of the biblical principles that should govern and guide our lives.

This chapter is definitely about revival. And of course, we need to ask ourselves one question, and that is, will the preaching of the word alone bring revival?

[35 : 36] The answer to that, of course, is not necessarily, at least not in a mechanical way.

Revival is always God's work. But if we think we can produce it by some other mechanical means, or even this means, we actually are being manipulative.

But although revival doesn't automatically follow from faithful exposition of the Bible, God nevertheless does bless the faithful exposition, and revival almost never happens without it.

Characteristically, it's through such Bible preaching that times of renewal and reformation have come. Listen to what D. Martin Lloyd-Jones had to say about the value of preaching.

He said, what is it that always holds, or that always heralds, excuse me, the dawn of a reformation or of a revival? It is renewed preaching. Not only a new interest in preaching, but a new kind of preaching.

A revival of true preaching has always heralded these great movements in the history of the church. And of course, when the reformation and the revival come, they have always led to great and notable periods of the greatest preaching that the church has ever known.

[36 : 47] As was true in the beginning as described in the book of Acts, it was also true after the Protestant Reformation, the 17th century, and in the 18th century. That's interesting to think, isn't it, that what always heralds a dawn of reformation and revival is renewed preaching?

That's why we should be praying for our next pastor to make sure that we see that here as well. So let's pray that when we hear the word of God faithfully read and explained, we'll respond with the same conviction that the Jews did in Nehemiah 8.6.

And that's where they said this, Then all the people answered, Amen, Amen, while lifting up their hands, and they bowed their heads and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground.

Thank you.