



Empowering People to Change the World

The Church and the Power of God's Word

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The Church and the Power of His Word Nehemiah 8

ROAD DECLARATION...

We had a phenomenal time in DC with Sean Feucht. Awesome time of prayer, worship, and believing God for a great awakening in America.

Donald Trump wants to make America Great Again, but Jesus, wants to make the Church in America Great Again! And when the Church in America is great again, then America will be great again!!

Alexis de Tocqueville was the French author of *Democracy in America* (1835), perhaps the best, and certainly the most widely-quoted book ever written about the United States. He was unusual for his time in many ways. One way in which he stood out in nineteenth-century France was his attitude towards religion: *“Not until I went into the churches of America and heard her pulpits flame with righteousness did I understand the secret of her genius and power. America is great because America is good, and if America ever ceases to be good, America will cease to be great.”* (<https://www.azquotes.com/quote/815685>)

We are at A Nehemiah Moment in America

- We are in a “Nehemiah Moment” in America. This is not as much about an election coming up, as it is a Wake Up Call to America, a Wake Up Call to the Church!
- This is not a referendum on the Left or Right, or a referendum on Republican or Democrat...this is a referendum on the Church!
- What are we building in our nation? This is a Nehemiah Moment for pastors and leaders in our nation.
- We are being called by God to rebuild the walls of our nation, to rebuild the walls of our families, to see our occupations as our mission field.

- We are building a “Nehemiah Generation” of young people who will rebuild the walls of America:
 - Will we abandon the Vision of America for Socialism.
 - Will we build on being a land that believes in “life, liberty, and the right to pursue happiness.”

- Look at what Nehemiah encountered: Nehemiah 1:2-4
 - The walls are all broken down.
 - The people are discouraged and distressed.
 - And Nehemiah fasted and prayed for wisdom.

- But today, a day before our National Election, we find ourselves in Nehemiah 8:
 - The wall has been completed after just 52 days, an amazing feat.
 - The people feel secure and even against all odds, there is now a whole new attitude and new confidence.

- You will do amazing exploits when your work is done in submission to God, His Word and His Spirit.

- The first 7 chapters of Nehemiah have been autobiographical on Nehemiah’s leadership, but now we see Ezra, the Priest, entering into the picture.

- This is a Great Awakening in Israel. This is one of the most powerful chapters in all of the Bible concerning revival and the power of the Word of God.

- This is the beginning of great revival in Israel...genuine revival.
 - The signature of revival is repentance.
 - Revival happens to believers, something is revived.

- Deep conviction of sin is the precursor to revival and evangelism is the by-product of revival.
- Revival in church history has always been centered around God's Word.
- Ps. 138: The Lord magnifies His Word above His name.

Vs. 1-2

- This is the 7th month, the Feast of Trumpets, and they were to have a holy assembly. (Leviticus 23 and Numbers 29)
- There are times in the life of a church, where the whole congregation should come together and seek God as "one man," in unity, to search out the heart of God.
 - Ex. We are on Day 40 of our 52 days of Noon Day Prayer
 - Ex. Special Gathering on Wednesday Night for Praise
- Notice that Ezra is responding to the people longing to hear God's Word...they request the reading of the Word of God.
- They open the Law of Moses, the Pentateuch, the first 5 books of Moses, the first 5 books of your Bible: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.
- They requested Ezra because he was a man of the Word.
- We need pastors and leaders in our pulpits who are preeminently men of God's Word!!
 - Passionately love Word of God and the God of the Word.
 - 2 Chronicles 16:9
For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him. In this you have done foolishly; therefore from now on you shall have wars." NKJV

- Diligently study God's Word.
- Prepare their hearts to be His vessel for the Word.
- The preaching of the Word should exalt Jesus...for He is the Word of God.
- Submitted to God's Word in their lives.
- Malachi 2:7
*"For the lips of a priest should keep knowledge,
 And people should seek the law from his mouth;
 For he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts."*

The People didn't have the Word of God.

- At this time, the Word of God was a scroll, as opposed to a text consisting of bound pages, and the people didn't have the Word of God.
- In Deut. 31, we read that such a reading was required every 7 years though it had been neglected since the Babylonian captivity (for over 100 years).

Vs. 3

- Wow, they heard the reading and teaching of God's Word from daybreak to noon, a period of at least 6 hours.

John Calvin said of God's work in preaching, *"He deigns to consecrate the mouths and tongues of men to his service, making his own voice to be heard in them. Whenever God is pleased to bless their labor, he makes their doctrine efficacious by the power of his Spirit; and the voice, which is in itself mortal, is made an instrument to communicate eternal life."*

Martin Luther said, *"Know first of all that a Christian congregation should never gather together without the preaching of God's Word and prayer, no matter how briefly, as Psalm 102 says, 'When the kings and the people*

assemble to serve the Lord, they shall declare the name and the praise of God.’ And Paul in Corinthians 14 says that when they come together, there should be prophesying, teaching, and admonition. Therefore, when God’s Word is not preached, one had better neither sing nor read, or even come together.”

- Ex. I always ask our guest speakers to ground their messages from the Word of God. Not men’s opinions with a sprinkling of God’s Word, but rather start with the text and preach from there.
- We are not interested in men’s opinion, but God’s fresh anointed Word from the Scriptures!

Vs. 4

- This was a large platform, large enough to hold 14 people.
- The men were probably other priests who stood with Ezra, to show their agreement and unity.
- More than likely when Ezra became weary, the other priests would take over and assist him.

Vs. 5-6

- Out of reverence and expectation, the people stood when the scroll was opened.
- They bowed down and said “amen,” meaning “so be it” they are saying in their bodies and hearts, “We will obey, we are submitted to Your Word, O Lord.”
- The Jews are expectant! They have faith to not just hear, but fear the Word of God!
- Do you come with expectation? Faith that God is going to speak to your heart?

- You should make this your prayer every weekend: “God you have a fresh revelation for me; speak Lord, I am listening. I need fresh manna from heaven.”
- The Word of God is alive! It is moving! It is looking for certain kinds of prepared, expectant hearts that it might be planted and bring forth fruit in your lives.
- Turn to Matt 13:3-23.

- Matthew 13:3-23

Then He spoke many things to them in parables, saying: "Behold, a sower went out to sow. 4 And as he sowed, some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds came and devoured them. 5 Some fell on stony places, where they did not have much earth; and they immediately sprang up because they had no depth of earth. 6 But when the sun was up they were scorched, and because they had no root they withered away. 7 And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up and choked them. 8 But others fell on good ground and yielded a crop: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. 9 He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"...

14 And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says:

'Hearing you will hear and shall not understand,

And seeing you will see and not perceive;

15 For the hearts of this people have grown dull.

Their ears are hard of hearing,

And their eyes they have closed,

Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears,

Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn,

So that I should heal them.' ...

18 "Therefore hear the parable of the sower: 19 When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside. 20 But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; 21 yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles. 22 Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this

world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful. 23 But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty."

- If you come with a prepared, expectant heart, God will meet your desires and implant His Word into your heart, that will then multiply and bless you 30x, 60x, and in some cases, 100x in fruitfulness.

Vs. 7-8

- God used this passage in my life powerfully years ago, when God convicted my heart to begin teaching the Bible, chapter by chapter and verse by verse.
- Before that, I had preached topical sermons.
- If God had meant the Bible to be taught topically, he would have given us a topical Bible, rather He gave us books of the Bible.
- But the Holy Spirit led me to this chapter and I saw the Spirit's power through a thorough teaching of God's Word.
- We observe here the best and most clear definition of expository teaching in all of the Bible.
- **In Vs. 8, we see three parts to the exposition of God's Word:**
 1. Distinctly read the passage.
 2. "Gave the sense of it" - explain it, break it down in a way that the people can understand .
 3. "Helped them to understand the reading" - Ezra and the other priests practically applied the Word of God.
- Ex. I hear all the time people saying to me: "For the first time, I understand God's Word; I now have a hunger for God's Word!"

- Paul said to the Ephesian elders:

Acts 20:27

For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God.

- I have seen new cliques, new church growth methods and new hypes, and they all fade away...but God's Word stands forever.
- We always need more sensational, and it wears you out, and you need something more sensational.
- I think the Word of God is sensational enough...and I count it a privilege.
- I want to teach the Bible, not just from the Bible! Many pastors are chasing the issues instead of just teaching the Bible.
- Let the Bible teach itself.
- Whenever you are looking for a church, look for a church that teaches God's Word, book by book, chapter by chapter and verse by verse
- Look for a teacher/pastor who can powerfully explain and apply God's Word to your life.

Alistair Begg: [Today, in our churches we have] a preoccupation with psychological theory [and it] has in many cases eroded confidence in the Scriptures. When the essence of the human predicament is redefined in terms of a lack of self-esteem, it is almost inevitable that people will be directed toward a couch but not a cross, a psychologist but not a Savior. The extent to which this has happened can be gauged by listening to various strange blends of psychology and theology, some of which are even offered as attempts at expository preaching!

So we now see the power of God's Spirit...

Vs. 9

- The Spirit of God working through the Word of God changes the people of God.
- The world desensitizes us to God's values and ways.
- The Word of the Lord moved the hearts of the Jews and they began to mourn over their sins.

A Word of God Awakening

1. The Word of God Brings Conviction to our Hearts

- The Word of God should bring repentance and deep sorrow to our hearts for our disobedience to Him.

Vs. 10

- Under such conviction, Ezra instructs them not to stay in a place of repentance and mourning, but to know they are forgiven and to now let the joy of their relationship with God take over.

2. The Word of God Produces Joy and Strength.

- True biblical holiness produces joy.
- Not legalism! That produces a "keeping score" mentality of "don't do this...do that." I
- Obedience to God will produce joy.
- More and more we should be moving in that direction...nobody does it perfectly.
- Joy produces strength!
- Joy is strength to your bones and body!

- What makes God happy, will make us happy!

Vs. 11

- Slow down and rest in the Lord.

3. The Word of God produces rest in our lives.

- We all need rest and peace in our hearts.

- Hebrews 4:11-13

Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience. 12 For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. 13 And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.

Vs. 12

4. The Word of God understood and applied will change our lives.

- They went from disobedience and sorrow to joy and vision.
- God's Word will not produce joy until you apply it, obey it to your lives.

Vs. 13

5. The Word of God studied produces a hunger and appetite for more.

Vs. 14-18

6. The Word of God understood gives fresh revelation.

Questions for your 2:42 Small Group:

A Word of God Awakening

- 1. How has The Word of God brought Conviction to your Heart?**
- 2. How has The Word of God produced Joy and Strength in your life?**
- 3. How has The Word of God understood and applied, changed our lives**
- 4. Are you spending regular time daily in God's Word? Why or why not?**