
Lifting Up The STANDARD

“When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him” (Isaiah 59:19).



Challenging And Encouraging God's Remnant To Remain Faithful

A BIBLE REVIVAL

“Then Eliashib the high priest rose up with his brethren the priests, and they builded the sheep gate; they sanctified it, and set up the doors of it; even unto the tower of Meah they sanctified it, unto the tower of Hananeel” (Nehemiah 3:1).

From Bondage To Blessing, From Blessing To Apathy

God's people went from *bondage* to *blessing* when God allowed them to go back to Jerusalem under Ezra. Unfortunately only a small remnant of them chose to go back. Most of God's people had gotten quite content in the world. The people that went back from bondage to blessing, soon went from blessing to apathy. They got discouraged. They were trying to build the wall. The Temple had been rebuilt, but there was a lot of work to do and a few people to do it.

A Message For The Remnant

Haggai came on the scene and preached some straightforward messages about how God's remnant needed to straighten up their act, and they did. As a result they were in a condition for revival. That's when Nehemiah comes on the scene, and we saw in Chapter one that Nehemiah was a man who was *concerned*; he was a man who was *convicted*, and as a result of that, he *confessed* his sin. And Nehemiah wasn't a prophet, a priest, or a king. He didn't have any official position. He wasn't a Levite. He wasn't a scribe. Nehemiah was a person who loved the Lord and wanted to do right, and God chose him to lead in a tremendous revival. God would look to anyone today who is willing to say, "*Here am I, Lord, send me.*"

Pastors And Parents

Nehemiah represents leadership in the area of revival, and those who are going to be used of the Lord to lead in a revival are going to be people who are concerned and convicted of their sin and who will confess their sin as Nehemiah did. As we mentioned before, God's leadership as far as His work is concerned are pastors and parents. So as pastors and parents, we need to be concerned about the situation; we need to be convicted about our own sin, and then if we would confess our sin, "*he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*"

When Nehemiah arrived at Jerusalem the first thing that he did was go out by night and take a look at *the valley gate*, then he looked at *the dung gate*; then he went to *the fountain gate* and then back to *the*

valley gate. There is a lesson here for those of us who are leaders. Nehemiah was a man *concerned*, *convicted*, and a man who would *confess* his sin, but he realized that he needed to examine this situation in a very personal way.

Three Important Gates

When we get a little further along in this chapter, we will see that the valley gate represents *humility* and the dung gate is where they carried out all the *garbage*. The fountain gate represents the *Holy Spirit*. The Holy Spirit must be in charge of everything. Nehemiah returned to the valley gate because that's where it all begins for us as individuals. God says, "*If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.*"

The Wall And The Gates

In chapter three the work begins. They are going to rebuild the gates and they are going to rebuild the wall. There is no sense building anything unless the wall is put up first. Nehemiah said, "*...let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach.*" When the wall is down, the enemy comes in, and the cause of Jesus Christ becomes nothing more than a reproach in the eyes of the people.

The Sheep Gate First

The most important gate of all is the sheep gate that represents our relationship with Jesus Christ. When John the Baptist saw Jesus, he said, "*Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.*" The sheep gate represents our relationship with Christ.

Guilt Or Conviction?

Now, when we have a situation like that and we're very sincerely wanting to do what is right, we need to be careful when we get to this area of soul searching. Soul searching is a very personal thing, and if we're not careful, the devil will send us on a guilt trip. The Holy Spirit deals with conviction; the devil deals with guilt, and there's a major difference here. If the devil could get the pastor or the faithful parent or any faithful Christian discouraged, he can destroy the effectiveness of that Christian. We need to keep our focus on the Lord so that we don't fall into the devil's guilt rather than Holy Spirit conviction.

You remember the story when Jesus was walking on the water, and it was a very stormy night, and Peter said, "*...bid me come unto thee on the water.*" Well, I like Peter. He kind of reminds me of myself. He's a slow learner, but he would rather be out there with Jesus in that storm than in the safety of that boat without Him. Peter got out of the boat, and he is the only human being who walked on water. No other person has walked on water, but Peter did—until he got his eyes off the Lord. The Bible says there was a wind and there were waves, and Matthew 14:30 says, "*But when he*"— Peter—"saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid..." That word "*boisterous*" has been translated "*mighty*" ten times. It has been translated "*strong*" nine times.

Peter got out of the boat, and he was fine as long as he kept his focus on the Lord. So if you determine you want to rebuild this sheep gate, and want to keep your relationship with the Lord the way that would be "*acceptable unto Him,*" make sure, above all, that you keep your focus on the Lord. The Bible says in Nehemiah eight and verse ten that "*the joy of the LORD is your strength.*" The devil would like you to do is to lose that joy. If you lose that joy, you lose the strength. So when you get involved in the things of the Lord, if you're a sincere and honest Christian, you know how important the local church is, but if you're seeking for your joy in the local church, you're going to be disappointed.

The songwriter has written the song, "*Only Jesus Can Satisfy Your Soul*," and the song says:

*The world will try to satisfy That longing in your soul.
You may search the wide world over
But you'll be just as before! You'll never find true satisfaction
Until you've found the Lord,
For only Jesus can satisfy your soul.*

I would write another verse to that song:

*The **church** will try to satisfy
That longing in your soul.
You may search that whole **church** over
But you'll be just as before!
You'll never find true satisfaction
Until you've found the Lord,
For only Jesus can satisfy your soul.*

Nehemiah 8:10 says that "*the joy of the LORD is your strength.*" The Holy Spirit will work with our spirit in the area of conviction, but the devil will work with our mind, our will, and our emotions, and rather than convict us of anything, he'll put us on a guilt trip.

The sincere Christian listens to the pastor, and he preaches a message on prayer, and right away the sincere Christian is going to feel guilty if the devil has his way: "*I don't pray enough.*" The pastor preaches the next Sunday on Bible study. "*Oh, I don't study the Bible enough either.*" The pastor teaches on winning the lost, and maybe you've witnessed to twelve people last week, but if you're going to listen to the devil, he'll put you on a guilt trip because none of those twelve got saved. Or maybe the pastor will preach a message on spending quality time with your family, and now you go on another guilt trip. The devil will quickly work his wiles to send us on a guilt trip if we listen to him.

So you come back to church like all good Christians do, and the next week the pastor is preaching a message on wives submit to your husband. "*Guilty again.*" Husbands love your wife as Christ loved the church. "*Oh, I'm guilty.*" If the devil has his way, he will send us on a guilt trip every time somebody preaches the Word of God. Maybe the next time you go to church, the pastor is preaching about serving the Lord or commitment or giving to missionaries. It doesn't matter what subject he's talking about, the devil will quickly work his wiles and send us on a guilt trip if we let him.

The devil works with our mind, our will, and our emotions, but it says in the Bible that "*the Holy Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirit.*" The Holy Spirit and the Word of God are always in total harmony, so if the Holy Spirit is convicting us about something, then it will be something that is totally in harmony with the Word of God.

Years ago A. W. Tozer said, "*How ever high the emotional content, no experience can be proven to be genuine unless we find chapter and verse authority for it in the Scriptures.*"

When it comes to preaching, Paul said in First Corinthians 2:1-5: "*And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech ... my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.*"

The Bible warns us in Romans 16:18 about those who would “*by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.*” According to Strong's Concordance, “*fair speech*” is “*a language artfully adapted to captivate the hearer.*” Colossians 2:4 warns us, “*...lest any man should beguile you with enticing words.*” That means appealing words, speech that would persuade. It’s interesting that Paul says in First Corinthians Chapter two that his speech and his preaching was not with enticing words. Second Peter 2:18 also warns about those who would speak with “*great swelling words,*” and Jude 1:16 warns again of those whose mouths “*speaketh with great swelling words.*”

“Great Swelling Words”

In the early years of my ministry, I would listen to some of the messages that I had preached, and I would say, “*Why do I change my voice when I preach? Why do I get into preacher voice? Why do I get into yelling and screaming and making these swelling words?*” Why don't we just talk? As I said, in this age in which we're living, we're seeing a whole lot under the banner of revival that is nothing more than great swelling words.

“Bring The Book”

In Nehemiah Chapter eight, they said in verse one, “*bring the book*”; in verse three, they were “*attentive unto the book*”; in verse five, “*Ezra opened the book*”; verse eight, “*they read in the book*”; verse eighteen, “*he read in the book*”; again, chapter nine, verse three, they “*read in the book*”; Nehemiah 12:23, it's “*written in the book*”; Nehemiah 13:1, “*they read in the book.*” Again, we saw in Nehemiah 8:2 that “*they heard with understanding and with knowledge.*” Nothing is mentioned about a loud emotional preacher. They just got the Word of God and explained what it meant.

The Purpose of Emotions Is To Bear Fruit

The Word of God is designed to stimulate our emotions. When we are rebuked, the Word should produce *sorrow* (Second Corinthians Chapter eight). When we're filled with the knowledge of God, according to Proverbs 1:7, we will *hate* what God hates, and hate is another emotion. Reading the Scriptures will move us to *fear* (Hebrews 10:25-27). Fear is an emotion. We've said previously that the emotion of *love* bears the fruit of obedience (John 14:15); the emotion of *hope* bears the fruit of patience (Romans 8:24-25); the emotion of *joy* bears the fruit of sacrifice (Second Corinthians 8:2-5); and the emotion of *sorrow* bears the fruit of repentance (Second Corinthians 7:10).

There's nothing wrong with emotions. Later on in the revival, Nehemiah said, “*...weep no more...for the joy of the LORD is your strength.*” Get happy. So we see that emotion is in the Bible, and we could probably spend a couple of weeks just discussing that subject. I watched something recently that's going on in North Carolina under the banner of revival. I'm in my seventies now, and I remember back in the sixties and the seventies when every Independent Fundamental Baptist preacher I knew was preaching against the kind of hooting and hollering that's going on under the banner of revival these days, because that's what the Pentecostals were doing in their services—and now fundamental independent Baptists are calling that nonsense revival. That's just nonsense. God's purpose in emotion is much more than having a warm and a fuzzy feeling.

*“Feelings come and feelings go, And feelings are deceiving;
 My warrant is the Word of God— Naught else is worth believing.
 Though all my heart should feel condemned For want of some sweet token,
 There is One greater than my heart Whose Word cannot be broken.
 I'll trust in God's unchanging Word Till soul and body sever,
 For, though all things shall pass away, HIS WORD SHALL STAND FOREVER!”*
 (Martin Luther)

Determining The Difference Between Guilt And Conviction

How can we tell the difference between Holy Spirit conviction and satanic guilt? When the Holy Spirit convicts us about something, it will always be specific. If He is convicting us about something, we should be able to write down on a piece of paper what it is. When Satan deals with guilt, he usually puts the Christian on a guilt trip— *"You're just a rotten, no-good person. You're simply a bad Christian,"* and there's nothing specific about it. When the Holy Spirit deals with us, He always offers a definite way out of our situation. The Bible says in First John 1:9, *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."* On the other hand, Satan's guilt offers no hope. After Satan inflicts us with guilt, then he leads us to depression; he leads us to discouragement, he leads us to doubt, and then despair, and then we just quit.

What To Do?

First of all, reject Satan's guilt. Listen carefully to the preaching of the Word of God. Reject everything that has no scriptural foundation. The Bible says in Acts 17:11 that the Bereans did two things; They, *"Received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so."*

I want to repeat what A. W. Tozer said: *"How ever high the emotional content, no experience can be proved to be genuine unless we can find chapter and verse authority for it in the Scriptures."* We need to reject Satan's guilt but welcome Holy Spirit conviction.

When Church Services Were Still Designed To Worship The Lord

There was a day when our church services were still considered worship services rather than an hour of entertainment for Christians. Today, if the service dare goes over the hour the people will be upset because they won't be able to beat the Pentecostals to the restaurant for lunch. That's not how it used to be. We should begin a service eager to receive the conviction of the Holy Spirit during a message that is based on the Word of God, but few people who call themselves Christians today really want God to speak to them personally.

The Prelude To Revival

The revival gets underway in Chapter eight, and the first thing to revival is to build that sheep gate. Nehemiah 3:1 says that *"they builded the sheep gate."* They set up the doors in the towers, they sanctified it, and they went to work and built that gate. The next gate we're going to look at is the fish gate found in verses three through five. If the fish gate is built before the sheep gate the fish gate will soon crumble as it needs the sheep gate to support it. Perhaps this is the reason why so few people who we say they received Christ don't last very long.

“A church fed on excitement is no New Testament church at all. The desire for surface stimulation is a sure mark of the fallen nature, the very thing Christ died to deliver us from.”



A. W. Tozer

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