

Sermon 08: "Spiritual Renewal"

Scripture: [Nehemiah 8: 1-19](#)

Theme: *A Strong Emphasis on God's Word is a primary mark of spiritual renewal.*

All throughout the book of Nehemiah so far, we have seen worship taking place. This is a common response for Nehemiah and from the city of Jerusalem given multiple circumstances¹. We continue to see it in an "official" sense like we see in our churches today and throughout the rest of Scripture. We see that Nehemiah gathers everyone around and reads aloud the [Book of the Law of Moses](#).² We also see this week the turning point in the story. While the wall has been built, Nehemiah still has work to do within Jerusalem.

In my research for this week's sermon, one commentator had this to say about Nehemiah's work:

Nehemiah had indeed come to Jerusalem to rebuild the wall, and he had been successful in doing it. But we discover now that the rebuilding was far from all he had in mind. Nehemiah wanted to rebuild the wall, but beyond that objective he had the far more significant objective of rebuilding the nation.³

Like the above quote says, Nehemiah did not just come to rebuild the wall, he came to rebuild and restore the people of Jerusalem. He came to bring about a spiritual renewal within these people and we see this renewal in the following ways.

For spiritual renewal, God's people must read His Word.

We see in the opening verses that Nehemiah has now brought in some help to continue on the restoration piece. We now have Ezra who comes in and reads aloud the Word of God.⁴ Nehemiah knew his place within the restoration process, and his was a leader of the rebuilding. However, he knew and felt that there was to be a restoration and renewal amongst the people of God. So he called in Ezra to come and preach to these people. He knew that works alone would not bring these people closer to God. While the act of service unto the Lord is not a bad thing, we cannot rely on that to fill us; it has to be the very Word of God.⁵

¹ [Nehemiah 1:4; 2:5; 2:13; 3; 4:4-5; 4:21; 5:7; 5:13; 6:3; 6:8; 6:11; 7:1](#)

² Genesis → Deuteronomy

³ Boice, J. M. (2005). *Nehemiah: An expositional commentary* (89). Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books.

⁴ [Nehemiah 8:1-2](#)

⁵ [Matthew 4:4](#)

So how are you doing individually at reading the Word of God? Do you know why it is important? [2 Timothy 3:16](#) talks about how it is the very word of God that is perfectly breathed out by God. [John 20: 30-31](#) talks about how the purpose of Scripture (in particular his Gospel) is so that we may believe in Jesus Christ. We are blessed to have the very Word of God in our house (and for some of us, more than one copy in more than one version). Who are we to think that we do not need to be transformed by Scripture? We do live in a culture that allows us to find lots of false truths and identities; all the more do we need Scripture then.

Husbands how are you doing at leading your wife in this?⁶ Ladies, how are you doing at leading other women in the faith?⁷ How can we encourage you to be in the Word more and be sanctified from it? How do we encourage you to form that discipline? How often are you currently reading Scripture? What are you reading through? Are you meditating on it day and night? Do you have a plan? If not, please [click this link](#) to be lead to a great starting spot. This will help you to read through the entire Bible within a year.

For spiritual renewal, God's people must reverently hear His Word taught & expounded.

In verses 3-8 we see that Ezra read aloud the Book of the Law of Moses and the people responded with Amen. However, Ezra did not just stop at reading alone, he took time to teach everyone there. Ezra even had seven of his best Levites there to help instruct people in these words so that they would all understand. We see that reading the Word is very important, and people were even reverent to it (standing and exiting in silence) however, a revival usually does not just come from reading alone.

Similarly, we have the same thing in our churches today. Regardless of what denomination you come from, the Word of God is typically expounded on for a period of time. We see this with people coming to hear Jesus teach and expound on Scripture.⁸ We see it in Acts with the early church⁹ and we of course have the Epistles, the Letters (sermons) that Paul wrote to specific churches. When we come together, we are not just sitting through forty-five minutes of someone just sharing their thoughts on a piece of Scripture. We are coming to hear the very Word and heart of God read and expounded on. We should walk away taking something with us, and leaving

⁶ [Ephesians 5:26](#)

⁷ [Titus 2:3-4](#)

⁸ [Matthew 5-7](#)

⁹ [Acts 2:42-47](#)

something before God. We take off our old self and put on the new self through¹⁰ the washing of the Word.

For spiritual renewal, God's people must respond to His Word.

Notice the reaction of people during the reading of the Word? People were weeping at these words, probably because they had become so convicted by it and they were encouraged by it. They heard that there is a God of Justice and Wrath and that within His Kingdom, there is no room for sin. However, they would have seen a God who is reconciling and redeeming people back to himself since the Fall.

Notice what Nehemiah, Ezra, and the Levites then instruct the people to go and do? We see the people of Jerusalem being sent out to go and celebrate God's faithfulness. They have wine, people are eating fat (talk about a different diet back then), and encouraging people to come and celebrate with them. Look anything similar to the early church and hopefully our churches today?

After reading the Word of God, and listening to it expounded upon, we are to then respond faithfully to the Good News of Jesus Christ. Some common responses are: repentance, joy, good deeds, obedience, and worship. A pastor does not spend his entire week prepping for a sermon to give to God's people in hopes that they will listen and respond. These are all responses that Scripture calls us to have.

If you have been coming to Missio Dei Church long enough, then you have heard quite a few sermons, totaling quite a few hours, and have obtained quite a bit of knowledge. So what have you done with it? What have you imparted onto other believers? Have you taken the Good News of Jesus Christ and shared it with your family, neighbor, co-worker...etc? Or have you just done a really good job of "stewarding that Good News into your own head" and being selfish and lazy with it? How are you doing at disciplining your children in the Word as well as other believers?

The very Word of God is sweet like honey, and brings us through the process of sanctification. However, we are not to hoard this Good News, we are to share it so that ultimately the world would know that the Father sent the Son.

Questions to think about:

1. There was mourning and weeping from the people when they heard the reading of Scripture. What was it that they were mourning? When was the last time you mourned for something that broke God's heart?
2. Is depression a sin (always, sometimes, never)? Defend your answer biblically.

¹⁰ [2 Corinthians 5:17](#)

NEHEMIAH

The Restoration of God's People

2. How can a believer distinguish the conviction of the Holy Spirit from the accusation of the enemy?
3. Why is it important for every believer, in spite of natural temperament, to develop the joy of the Lord? What is at stake?
4. What made Jesus rejoice greatly? What does He tell us to rejoice in (Luke 10:17-22)?
5. We see that the people responded to the reading of the Word in at least five ways: repentance, joy, good deeds, obedience, and worship. Where do you see this pattern in this chapter? Do you see this pattern in your personal life? In the corporate life of Missio Dei Church?