

**Bible Study of Nehemiah**  
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**Nehemiah - ch. 9 Steps that lead to Revival**

**No.8**

The events of Ch.9 took place 2 days after the end of the great Convention of ch.8.

There had been a readiness to hear the Word of God- and a willingness to obey the Will of God. Initial repentance had been followed by great rejoicing. But now the feasting was over and a period of reflection followed. If all 3 of Nehemiah's prayers were to be answered.

1. The Walls had been Rebuilt; 2 The Word had been re-emphasised -  
and now the Worship needed to be Restored

These things are the basis of any new work for God among his people. When God sees that the people are in earnest and want holiness more than anything else – that they want to be right with him at whatever the cost – then He will come in revival blessing upon the church.

There is a basic difference between Evangelism and Revival - and we must not confuse them - as the Americans do in calling evangelistic services 'Revivals'

a) Evangelism has to do with a sharing of the gospel with those who need a Saviour.

Revival is the renewing work of God within his church,

b) Evangelism is the work of the church on behalf of God.

Revival is the work of God in the church.

c) Evangelism is the ongoing telling of the gospel to others.

Revival is the gracious outpouring of God's Holy Spirit upon the church.

You can have Evangelism without Revival - but you rarely have Revival without evangelism.

In Revival the church is re-vitalised and the community is evangelised - And God's Name is glorified.

There are steps that lead to Revival – and in ch.9 they are clearly seen :-

vv1-3 Brokenness; vv6-25 A Spirit of Thankfulness;

vv26-32 A recognition of sinfulness

And vv33-38 A Consecration and willingness.

If we have never known Revival, either in a personal or collective sense as a church, it is because we have declined to take the steps that may lead to it.

A Brokenness before God - and a Thankfulness to God for his grace.  
A Confession of our sinfulness and a willingness to yield ourselves to Him.

Revival isn't for the non-believer – it is for every believer.  
Revival – in the Greek 'anazao' - means 'to live again.'  
Cp Romans. 14v9. "Christ died and returned to life (anazao) – i.e. lived again.  
Luke 15v32 of the Prodigal son the father said – ' He was dead and is alive again (anazao)'

Revival is re-living i.e. resurrection following death.  
Salvation gives us new life at the cross of Christ Revival is resurrection life that comes when we are prepared to be crucified with Christ' so that we can live again.

Brokenness that comes from a real sorrow for sin precedes such revival.  
We sing in a chorus – "Spirit of the Living God fall afresh on me.  
Break me; melt me; mould me; Fill me.  
Spirit of the Living God fall afresh on me.'

There is not short cut to a life like that of Jesus. It will mean dying to sin before there can be a life to be lived in the fullness of the reviving Spirit of God.

Read Ezekiel ch. 37 where the dry bones are given new form, but no life. They only came to life when the Spirit of God was breathed into them. The illustration was not lost on the prophet because the Lord went on to say – v14 'I will put my spirit in you and you will live.'

This is a question that every church and every individual believer has to answer.  
"Am I (we) prepared to pay the price of being made to live again?"

What that price will involve will be a renewal of our vows to God, and a consecration of our whole selves - body, soul and spirit to him

### 1. Separation - Read vv1-5

Just 2 days after the feasting came a period of fasting.  
v1 – 'the people assembled, fasting and wearing sackcloth'.

This was a sign of their awareness of sin and of having disobeyed the lord – and of their willingness to repent and seek a fresh start.

i. There was a deep sense of Community –v1.

They were all equally involved in the guilt. They were united by their sinfulness.

ii. There was deep sense of the need for Confession – v2

Their sin would not go away by itself. It had to be forgiven before it could be forgotten.

iii. There was a deep sense of Communion - v3b.  
They worshipped the Lord together.

The Christian Life is to be one of constant renewal. We have been given a new life by the Holy Spirit - and he comes to live in that new heart to make Christ real in us. As in the case of a modern day 'heart transplant' the recipient of that new heart has to take daily correctives to ensure that the new heart will not be rejected

Repentance – followed by forgiveness leads to joy.  
It is not a question of 'Did you repent when you believed?' – I hope you did.  
But it is more a question of 'Do you still repent daily as you seek to live more for God?'  
Conviction; followed by Confession; leads to Forgiveness and Joy as an extension of refining Grace and result in a daily walk which is pleasing to God.

Peter is a good example. At first he refused to let Jesus wash his feet, but when he realised that it would affect his relationship with his Lord he asked for more – 'Not only my feet but my whole body'. Jesus' reply is significant. "Those who have already been bathed only need their feet washing because they have been soiled by the dust they have walked on.

We have been cleansed (bathed as it were) in the precious blood of Jesus.  
Sins confessed have been forgiven – but sins yet to be committed have also to be cleansed just as Peter's feet did.

So – v2 - they separated themselves from those who were strangers to God's grace – so that God could extend his forgiving grace to them. They discovered that before God they had nothing to be proud about. They discovered something great about God because, while they rejoiced and feasted, they had realised how much they depended on God's grace day by day.

They wanted to be right with god more than anything else, no matter what it cost, or what others might think of them.

It meant Separation from all that was sinful  
It meant brokenness before God.  
It meant that 'self' would have to be 'crucified with Christ' before revival could come.

They were not concerned with what others thought or did – their hearts had been pierced by the sharp edge of God's Word - and no amount of pretending they hadn't heard or understood would give them peace with God and new life through him.

So what did they do? They separated themselves from others and came together as God's people to seek God's Will for them from his Word.  
v2b – they stood in their places – apparently no place to sit down -And perhaps too many to sit down on the ground. As they stood they confessed their sins.

v3b -They listened to the Word of God for 3 hours ( a ¼ of a day i.e. of 12 hours)  
v3c -The result was further confession for even more sins revealed by the Word – again for 3 hours. It was only when full confession had been made that true worship could begin. v3c

6 hours – equally divided between hearing the Word and acting upon it.  
They had no watches to look at – or in their case ‘looking at the sun.’ They started at sunrise and now it was midday.

v5c - They were encouraged by the Levites standing on the platform steps to ‘Stand up and praise the Lord your God.’

God heard their confession – forgave their sin – and accepted their worship. He resists the proud – but with those whose hearts are broken and contrite he will bless. cp Isaiah 57 vv15 ‘This is what the high and lofty one says – He who lives for ever, whose name is holy:

‘I live in a high an holy place – but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite.’

Brokenness is the basic condition for blessing and fruitfulness. The ‘seed’ thrives best in broken soil. Life from God will only thrive in the soil of a heart separated from sin.

## **2. Thankfulness - Read vv 6-25**

If separation is where we start there must follow a preparation of the heart as we go on with God. It is only when we are aware of who God is, and of what He has done, that we will be willing to give him the first place in our lives.

The Levites prepared the way for Renewal and Revival by offering a prayer of thankfulness for all that God had done. It is the longest prayer recorded in the Bible and was a reminder to the people of God’s great mercy, grace and love – and of their own great sin and disobedience.

They had been an ungrateful people taking all the God had done for them as their right. They thought that they deserved the best that He could offer without offering Him their best in return.

Look at the content of the prayer -

### **a) It began with Adoration vv5b-6**

We must never forget that He is the Creator of all things - and we are the crown of that creation – made in the ‘image of God.’

v6 - You alone are God; there is no other – You are the LORD  
You are the Creator-God – the life –giving God. You are the one who has a glorious Name and a nature that is also as glorious. All heaven worships you – and so should we.

### **b) It continued with Thankfulness vv 7-15**

v4c -they prayed out loud – not for God to hear – but for all the people to hear.

vv7-8 They began with God’s Call of Abraham

vv9-11 moves on to remember his deliverance of the people from Egypt

v12 reminds them of God’s guidance and presence with them in the desert.

vv13-14 - speaks of Moses – Mt. Sinai and the Law that God gave him.

v15 speaks of His bountiful provision at every point of their need over 40 years of wilderness wandering.

Look at some of the phrases they used –

v13 You came down – you spoke – you gave

v14 You made known to them

v15 You gave them bread from, heaven and water from the rock.

You told them to go in and possess the land

Who did all these things? YOU did – because You are the Lord.

Thankfulness for all that God had done for them should have been the automatic and natural response from everyone who had be so blessed by God.

He had brought them from Egypt – from a land where the was ‘**LESS than Enough**’.

Through 40 years in the desert where there was ‘**Just Enough**’.

And gave them the Promised Land where there was ‘**More Than Enough.**’

When you think of what God has done for you there should be a similar response of thankfulness for deliverance, guidance, protection, and provision - **But – v16**

This isn’t one of those ‘blessed buts’- and it is sad when it is one of condemnation instead.

But – it was not to be. Sin had made them stubborn, perverse and unthankful.

**Read vv16 -18.**

This is how they had repaid God for all his kindness and grace –

They were arrogant; stiff-necked; disobedient; refused to listen; failed to remember;

There is an upward progression with blessing – but there is also a downward slide into hardness of heart through such disregard of all that God had done for them.

We do not become what we are in a single day. We become what we are day by day with constant practice. This is perhaps why people never notice before it is too late the small changes which eventually become great problems.

They disobeyed once and then got better at it by practice. They forgot to say ‘Thank You’ the first time – and then forgot to say it at anytime. They refused to bow in humility and their neck muscles grew locked in an attitude of pride.

They refused to let God lead them forward - and preferred to choose a leader who would take them back to Egypt.

Then in v17 we have another BUT -

‘But you are a forgiving God - Gracious – compassionate and abounding in love.

What a relief we have a God like that when we find ourselves in the same situation as Israel did. God didn't desert them even when they made a Golden Calf to worship instead of worshipping him.

v19 gives us the reason why God was like this - because of his great compassion. I thank God that he doesn't treat us like we often treat him.

### **Read vv19 – 21**

v19 -God's goodness goes on - So does his guidance and provision vv19-22

It does not stop there – vv23-24 he gave them a land they didn't deserve – and filled it with an abundance they could enjoy. v25 Surely – now they would experience a change of heart and have a revival in their midst and they would want to live for God alone?

v26 - another 'bad BUT'. In spite of all God's goodness they remained as disobedient as ever to the extent that they are called rebels – lawless murderers of prophets – and blasphemers of God.

Time and time again we have a 'blessed BUT relating to God's grace and love to them – and

' Bad Buts ' relating to the peoples response to that love and grace.

v30 'Yet they paid no attention' – to God and were handed over to their enemies.

### **Read vv34-37**

When there is rebellion like this there can never be Revival.

When God's Law was only an external prohibition as written on stone there would be no new life until it was written on their hearts.

God is so much nearer to us – and so much better known to us through Jesus and His Word - and we are without excuse if we choose to live below the standard God has set for us – i.e. to be more like him.

All this came about because the people saw what sin had done to a previous generation and also what it was doing to them. They were no different to others – they were no better than others and in some things maybe even worse.

The more enlightened you are the more responsibility you have. Those who have never heard have an excuse - but those who have heard are 'without excuse'.

The greater our exposure to the Word of God the greater is our responsibility for how we respond to it.

The people had heard the Word for the last 3 hours and there was an equally long period of

re-assessment which lead to repentance.

Heart-searching is the first step to revival. It takes time and honest assessment before God comes in revival blessing. Getting alone with God and remembering who He is and all that He has done is important – and better still to remember who he did it for – for us. Then in our brokenness and thankfulness God will hear our cry and come down in response to it.

**Read vv32-29**

### **3. Consecration.**

So far the people had been conscious that their confession had been because of their past which needed to be cancelled. But they also needed their present corrected if their future was to be blessed by God.

v32 – Now therefore – Our God who is mighty and awesome is the one waiting to answer our prayers.

v33 What has happened to us is deserved - whilst we were doing wrong you remained faithful. v32 – YOU are our God.

Terrible misfortunes are often blamed on God – but more often the blame lies with us.

The Israelites had disregarded God and disobeyed His Word. They had rebelled against his rule - they had refused to reverence His Name. vv34-35.

So what happened to then was not unexpected .

v27 – SO – their enemies were allowed to prevail against them

v32 - Hardship replaced blessing

v35 - They had been given a rich land- Yet having received His goodness they were not prepared to consecrate themselves to him fully.

v36 – ‘We are slaves in our own land and our masters are getting the benefits of the promises we have forfeited’.

Why? - Because v37 – of our sins.

‘We are in great distress’. That was a blessing in disguise because their distress drove them back to God.

When we get really desperate with God this is the ground for Revival when we want His perfect Will is done on earth as it is done on heaven.

Prayer – ‘Lord, I deserve everything that has happened to me – You are right and I am often so wrong.’

Revival is not something that we can demand. It is something that only God can do at a time of his choosing. When we are at a loss to know what to do – when God sees our hearts searching for his answer - He will answer.

When we are prepared to pay the price of revival God is prepared to send it.  
When we want for our lives only what God wants it will be given.

It is not enough to say –‘God called me’ – but when He did I said, ‘Yes Lord – I will follow no matter what it costs.’

Nehemiah came to Jerusalem to experience revival that came through his obedience.  
We might expect the same.

A Hymn writer says –  
Consecrate me to Thy service Lord  
By the power of love divine;  
Let my soul look up with a steadfast hope;  
and my will be lost in Thine’.

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