

Sermon Notes

March 18, 2018

First Congregational Church of Pomfret

Rebuilding The People Inside the Walls

Nehemiah 7:73-8:18

Perspective

- ❖ Keeping the end in view
 - the difference between the "means" and the "end"
 - understand your role and your unique contribution to accomplishing the long-term goal
- ❖ Nehemiah knows the purpose of rebuilding the wall around Jerusalem is not just to have a wall
 - it's all about the people inside the wall
 - having a well-constructed wall is of little or no value if there is little or no life inside the wall

Revival

- ❖ The study of "revival" among God's people is a fascinating subject
 - distinction between "revival" and "awakening"
 - "re-vive" = to bring back to life, to live **again**
 - you cannot bring someone **back** to life who has never been alive

- "awakening" occurs when people who are born dead are brought from death to life, from darkness to light
- ❖ "When the Word of God is proclaimed and the people of God are mobilized, revival has occurred." (Charles Swindoll)
- Nehemiah 8 gives us a picture of what things look like when this happens
- Nehemiah 8 reminds us that spiritual life is about internals, not externals

History's First Revival

- ❖ The importance of having the right person in the right place at the right time
 - who is the "key player" in this revival?
 - Nehemiah knows Ezra is the best qualified, most prepared person to bring God's Word to the people
- ❖ The people gather as **one man** to hear God's Word (v. 1)
 - there is unity and common purpose among the people
 - there is great eagerness to hear God's Word
 - Ezra has prepared a lifetime for this moment (Ez 7:10)
 - learns the Word
 - lives the Word
 - lets the Word go out through him to others
 - Ezra masters the Word, the Word masters Ezra

- ❖ Revival must be fueled by the proclamation of God's true and living Word
 - Ezra prays and reads
 - the people listen attentively
 - the Levites explain the Word so everyone can understand what they hear
 - the crowd is convicted by what they have heard
 - godly grief spurs people to repentance

- ❖ Nehemiah and Ezra encourage the people to remember that although God punishes sin, God also blesses obedience
 - that calls for celebration!
 - ***the joy of the LORD is your strength.*** (v. 10)
 - strength is not about muscle
 - strength = *a stronghold, fortress, a place of refuge, safety, protection*
 - the saving power of God is our strength
 - the finished work of Christ on the cross is our strength
 - the triumph of Jesus' resurrection is our strength
 - this kind of joy will not leave us unchanged

 - ❖ the reading of God's Word is a challenge to the conscience of God's people as well as a declaration of God's grace

 - ❖ True revival is not a momentary surge or a flash in the pan
 - God's people evidence a desire to grow and move forward in their commitment to holiness and obedience
 - the very next day, the people gather together for more Bible study
 - true revival results in a commitment to not only study and learn God's Word but to obey God's Word

Personal Reflection

1. If you were not a Christian and you continually met believers who had never read the Bible and who were largely ignorant of its content, what impression of the Bible and Christianity would you be left with?

2. Is your heart and soul glad as you gather with other believers to hear God's Word preached and taught? If not, why not? What "safeguards" can you put in place to guard yourself against apathy toward God's Word?

3. How can you emulate the response the Jewish people manifest in Nehemiah 8 to the reading and explanation of God's Word?

4. What, if any, specific changes do you need to make in your life this week with respect to your relationship to the Word of God? How will you implement those changes?