

Signs of Revival (Living in God's Presence)

Preached by Pastor Matt Black on February 3, 2008. Text: Nehemiah 9

"...*this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the LORD is your strength*"
(Nehemiah 8:10).



Sign 1: Humility

When we see God, there is an awareness of self that brings a deep humility.

Nehemiah 9:1, "the children of Israel were assembled with fasting, and with sackclothes, and earth upon them".

Sign 2: Holiness (Separation from the World's Ways)

As Christians we are to "come out from among them, and be ye separate...and touch not the unclean thing", and God says, "I will receive you" (2 Corinthians 6:17).

Nehemiah 9:2a, "the seed of Israel separated themselves from all strangers".

Sign 3: Honesty

When revival comes, we choose to live in the presence of an omniscient God who knows all about us, and it causes us to be honest about our struggles with sin.

Nehemiah 9:2b, They "stood and confessed their sins, and the iniquities of their fathers".

Sign 4: Hunger for the Word

In God's presence, we cannot live by bread alone, but by every Word that proceeds out of God's mouth.

Nehemiah 9:3a, "and read in the book of the law of the LORD their God one fourth part of the day".

Sign 5: A Heart for God

When we are anointed in God's presence, it is pure joy to spend time with God.

Nehemiah 9:3b, "and another fourth part they confessed, and worshipped the LORD their God."

Sign 6: A "Heart Cry" for God

You will notice that the people's reading of the Scripture informs their prayers.

Nehemiah 9:4, "Then stood up upon the stairs, of the Levites...and cried with a loud voice unto the LORD their God"

Now we see prayer in four directions...

- Looking **up** to God's **greatness**. Nehemiah 9:5, "Stand up and bless the LORD your God for ever and ever: and blessed be thy glorious name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise".
- Looking **back** to God's **faithfulness** (verses 7-31). Nehemiah 9:7, "Thou art the LORD the God, who didst choose Abram".
- Looking **in**, in need of God's **forgiveness** (verses 32-37). Nehemiah 9:33, "...thou art just in all that is brought upon us: for thou hast done right, but we have done wickedly."
- Looking **ahead** to God's **service** (verse 38). Nehemiah 9:38, "...because of all this we make a sure covenant, and write it: and our princes, Levites, and priests, seal unto it".

Evidences of Revival

By Matthew S. Black, Pastor

Bible Text: Nehemiah 9

Date: Wednesday, February 3, 2010

Series: Nehemiah

Tabernacle Baptist Church

7020 Barrington Road

Hanover Park, Illinois 60133

Website: www.GodCentered.info

Introduction: Open your Bible to the book of **Nehemiah 9**. Tonight we are looking at "Evidences of Revival". Revival is a renewing of our first love with God. It is a renewing of our commitment. We ought to constantly do this. Jesus said in **Luke 9:23**, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me".

Let's stand and read **Nehemiah 9:1-3**, "Now in the twenty and fourth day of this month the children of Israel were assembled with fasting, and with sackclothes, and earth upon them. 2 And the seed of Israel separated themselves from all strangers, and stood and confessed their sins, and the iniquities of their fathers. 3 And they stood up in their place, and read in the book of the law of the LORD their God one fourth part of the day; and another fourth part they confessed, and worshipped the LORD their God."

[Prayer for Guidance]

Tonight we are looking at six signs of revival from **Nehemiah 9**. We need to remember that the Old Testament Scriptures are given for our edification.

Explanation: The feast of Tabernacles had ended on the 22nd day of the month, so they were done with the 7 days of feasting required for the Feast of Tabernacles. During the **Feast of Tabernacles**, they were to put up temporary dwellings to show that they are pilgrims and strangers on the earth. **Zechariah 14** is a beautiful exposition of the Feast of Tabernacles pointing to the time of the Gospel (cf. **Hosea 12:9**). The last day of the feast of the Tabernacles was "The Great Day of Hosanna", or **the great day of salvation!** This was a time of waiting for the Messiah. So the feast of Tabernacles was all about how we live temporarily on this earth until Messiah comes. We celebrate, because we know our life is temporary here, and God will be faithful!

I. **Humility. Nehemiah 9:1**, "the children of Israel were assembled with fasting, and with sackclothes, and earth upon them".

A. Sackcloth, what's sackcloth?

Verse 1 speaks of two days after this celebration. The people have now seen God, and there is a great humility. They go back to "fasting, and with sackclothes, and earth upon them" (**verse 1**). They are overwhelmed with the presence and goodness of God. The Jews in their culture would make the outside match the inside and would wear a rough shirt of hair made of course black goat hair, called sackcloth, and then they would put "earth" or ash upon their head.

When we see God, there is an awareness of self that brings a deep humility. There is an *urgency* in needing to know God more. They were **fasting**. They were in **sackcloth**. They had **earth and ashes** on their head. In other words, the greatness of God had overcome them to where their pleasure was no longer in the comforts of food and clothing. No longer did they care what people thought. They were consumed with God. Their hearts had burned with God's holiness, and it resulted in them seeing themselves as they were.

It showed sincere hatred of the old life, sincere humility and a turning from the old life. Jesus used this ritual a way to tell people to repent in **Matthew 11:20-21**.

Remember Jesus' words to the unbelievers in Galilee: "Woe to you, Chorazin! woe to you, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes" (**Matthew 11:20-21**).

B. Applications.

1. Not just a ritual, but reveals the heart. **Application:** This wasn't just a ritual to the people of Nehemiah's day. They had met God. They came away with wonder and a true view of themselves. Have you ever heard of anyone in the Bible who actually entered into the presence of God and who came away arrogant? No, you cannot. Because it simply is not possible to stand in the presence of God, the creator of the universe, and feel all high and mighty about yourself. In fact, I would say that Isaiah's reaction to being in God's presence (Isaiah 6) is fairly typical:

"Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts" (**Isaiah 6:5**).

2. Awareness of God brings an awareness of self, and then a forgetting of self. When we see God, there is an awareness of self that brings a deep humility. If you are struggling with pride in your life, you are neglecting your time with God. You need to be revived.

Application: The happy life that is revived by Christ is where we lose ourselves. **John 12:25**, "He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal." Are you grieved at the old life? Do you see yourself as powerless without God? Do you seek to please only God and not people? I guarantee that anyone with sackcloth and ashes was going to be seen as quite strange in the Gentile world.

3. What are some ways we can demonstrate humility?

- We do not need to put on a goat hair shirt and earth on our head, but we can "put off the old man...and put on the new" (**Ephesians 4:22-24**).
- Not thinking of ourselves as higher than others. **Philippians 2:3,5-8**—"Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. ... 5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: 6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: 7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: 8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself".

So the first sign of revival (living in God's presence) is **humility**.

- II. **Holiness** (Separation from the World). **Nehemiah 9:2a**, "the seed of Israel separated themselves from all strangers".

As Christians we are to "come out from among them, and be ye separate...and touch not the unclean thing", and God says, "I will receive you" (**2 Corinthians 6:17**).

- A. We cannot play games with sin and the world. We ought not to follow the world's fashions.
- B. We ought not to enjoy the world's entertainment. The world laughs about God. If you can freely watch TV and not turn it off because of conviction over sin that is on it, you are grieving the Holy Spirit.

Galatians 5:16, "This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh." Put your mind on the Word of God. Put your mind on holiness! You won't be able to watch a lot of what entertains the world.

Ephesians 4:30, "And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption".

Psalms 101:3, "I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave to me."

So the signs of revival (living in God's presence) are **humility** and **holiness**. There is another.

III. **Honesty**. **Nehemiah 9:2b**, They "stood and confessed their sins, and the iniquities of their fathers". When revival comes, we choose to live in the presence of an omniscient God who knows all about us, and it causes us to be honest about our struggles with sin.

We must be honest about our sins. We cannot live with guile and deceit. We cannot **excuse** our sins any more when revival comes. They had read the Word of God and it shined on their life and revealed all the dirty places. They didn't try to make excuses, but openly confessed their disobedience.

So the signs of revival (living in God's presence) are **humility**, **holiness**, and **honesty**. There is still another.

IV. **Hunger** for the Word. **Nehemiah 9:3a**, "and read in the book of the law of the LORD their God one fourth part of the day". In God's presence, we cannot "live by bread alone, but by every Word that proceeds out of God's mouth" (**Matthew 4:4**). When you are living in God's presence, you weigh every word by what God says.

The Word becomes addicting and satisfying! Job said in **Job 23:12**, "Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips; I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food". The people sat there and read the Scriptures for three or four hours.

A. Sometimes the Word of God seems boring or uninteresting. This happens if we are not reading God's Word with an eye to Jesus. Remember on the Road to Emmaus, Jesus said to the two who did not understand the Scriptures?

Luke 24:25-26, "Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: 26 Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?"

B. And what did Jesus do to make the Word meaningful? **Luke 24:27**, "And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself".

What was Jesus' hermeneutic (method of interpretation)? It was to see all the Old Testament Scriptures in light of His Work.

C. What happens when we read the Scriptures, understanding how they exalt Christ? We can see in the response of the two on the Road to Emmaus: **Luke 24:31-32**, "And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight. 32 And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?"

So the signs of revival (living in God's presence) are **humility**, **holiness**, **honesty**, and a **hunger for God's Word**. But there are still two more signs.

- V. A **Heart** for God. **Nehemiah 9:3b**, "and another fourth part they confessed, and worshipped the LORD their God." When we are anointed in God's presence, it is pure joy to spend time with God. What do you want? Whatever you want, if it is not God it will not satisfy.

Isn't God good? The Psalmist said in **Psalm 63:3**, "Because thy lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee".

David said in **Psalm 16:11**, "in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." He said in **Psalm 37:4**, "Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart".

Asaph said in **Psalm 73:25**, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee".

So the signs of revival (living in God's presence) are **humility, holiness, honesty, a hunger for God's Word**, and a heart for God. Now we come to our last sign.

- VI. A "**Heart Cry**" for God. (**Nehemiah 9:4-38**). **Nehemiah 9:4**, "Then stood up upon the stairs, of the Levites, Jeshua, and Bani, Kadmiel, Shebaniah, Bunni, Sherebiah, Bani, and Chenani, and cried with a loud voice unto the LORD their God".

You will notice that the people's reading of the Scripture informs their prayers.

- A. Looking up to God's **greatness (verses 5-6)**. **Nehemiah 9:5**, "Stand up and bless the LORD your God for ever and ever: and blessed be thy glorious name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise 6 Thou, even thou, art LORD alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein, the seas, and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worshippeth thee.".

When we living in God's presence, we see His greatness! We see His power. Let the trials come! Our God is greater! Let the impossible situations come! Our God is wiser! Let the financial woes come! Our God is richer! Our God is great! Our God is mighty and awesome. He made the heavens and the earth. Every thing depends on Him for life!

God is always greater, wiser, richer, and more powerful than anything you face. He's a mighty fortress, Martin Luther said. David said, He's my shield and my deliverer. He can do anything! Look to His greatness.

- B. Looking back to God's **faithfulness (verses 7-31)**. **Nehemiah 9:7**, "Thou art the LORD the God, who didst choose Abram". He called a heathen man and changed his name to Abraham. He can change you. He's faithful even when you are not!

The leaders of the Levites lead the people in prayer and recount God's faithfulness and Israel's unfaithfulness throughout history.

1. *From Abraham to Moses (9:7-8)*: The Lord called Abram out of Ur of the Chaldeans and made a covenant with him, promising to give him and his descendants the land of Canaan.
2. *From Moses to Joshua (9:9-23)*
 - God's **faithfulness (9:9-15, 19-23)**
 - He delivered them from Egypt (9:9-11).
 - He led them day and night in the wilderness (9:12, 19).
 - He taught them his laws at Mount Sinai (9:13-14).
 - He provided food and water for them (9:15, 20).

- He provided for all their needs (9:21) .
 - He gave them victory over their enemies (9:22–23).
- Israel's **unfaithfulness** (9:16–18)
 - They refused to obey God; therefore he wouldn't let them enter the Promised Land (9:16–17).
 - They worshiped a calf idol (9:18).
3. *From Joshua to the Judges* (9:24–26)
- God's **faithfulness** (9:24–25): God subdued the enemies of the Israelites.
 - Israel's **unfaithfulness** (9:26) : The Israelites disobeyed God, killing his prophets and committing terrible blasphemies.
4. *From the Judges to Ezra and Nehemiah* (9:27–31): God allowed the Israelites' enemies to conquer them because of their repeated sin.

Look at the people God saves. He saves those who are nothing, who are unworthy, who are sinners.

- He saves prostitutes like Rahab and the woman caught in adultery.
- He saves self righteous people like Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimethea and Saul of Tarsus.
- We are so unfaithful, but God is so faithful!

C. Looking in, in need of God's **forgiveness** (verses 32-37). **Nehemiah 9:33**, "...thou art just in all that is brought upon us; for thou hast done right, but we have done wickedly."

"Now therefore, our God, the great, the mighty, and the terrible God, who keepest covenant and mercy, let not all the trouble seem little before thee, that hath come upon us, on our kings, on our princes, and on our priests, and on our prophets, and on our fathers, and on all thy people, since the time of the kings of Assyria unto this day. 33 Howbeit **thou art just in all that is brought upon us**: for thou hast done right, but we have done wickedly: 34 **Neither have our kings, our princes, our priests, nor our fathers, kept thy law, nor hearkened unto thy commandments and thy testimonies, wherewith thou didst testify against them.** 35 For they have not served thee in their kingdom, and in thy great goodness that thou gavest them, and in the large and fat land which thou gavest before them, neither turned they from their wicked works. 36 Behold, we *are* servants this day, and for the land that thou gavest unto our fathers to eat the fruit thereof and the good thereof, behold, we *are* servants in it: 37 And it yieldeth much increase unto the kings whom **thou hast set over us because of our sins**: also they have dominion over our bodies, and over our cattle, at their pleasure, and we *are* in great distress."

God's covenant was broken, but there is one powerful phrase: "let not all the trouble seem little before thee" (verse 32). You've messed up. God cares. He will restore you. He will receive you.

Matthew 11:28, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

D. Looking ahead to God's **service** (verse 38). **Nehemiah 9:38**, "...because of all this we make a sure covenant, and write it; and our princes, Levites, and priests, seal unto it".

Conclusion: Next week we'll look at their covenant for God. But remember we want to serve God. We will be a doer of the Word if we are in Christ's presence. James 1:21-25, "Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls. 22 But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. 23 For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: 24 For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth

what manner of man he was. 25 But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed."