

8-29-2021, COTR Texarkana

Title: Return to God America, pt. -3

Purpose: Inspire people that one person can make a difference in calling people to return to God and provoke them to do what God calls them to do.

Spiritual truth: One person can make a difference in helping a nation to return to God.

Text: Nehemiah 1-2:8

Topic: Revival, Return to God, Nehemiah, Repentance

Series purpose: Call America to return to God and provoke Christians to follow the Biblical prescription for revival.

Series spiritual truth: When people return to God, a spiritual awakening can change a nation.

## Return to God America, pt. -3

### I. Introduction

- A. Review Series: 'Return to God America'. We all know America is in trouble. A spiritual revival is the answer. Revival is a return to God; it's a spiritual awakening. It has happened before in America and can happen again.
- B. Second Great Awakening in America happened in the 1800's.
  1. The Revival at Yale Univ.: Founded in 1701, by Congregationalist ministers unhappy with the growing liberalism at Harvard. Ministers donated 40 books and declared their objective, that "Youth may be instructed in the Arts and Sciences who through the blessing of God may be fitted for Publick employment both in Church and Civil State."<sup>3</sup> Yet, after 100 years, Christianity was almost nonexistent at Yale, the campus church almost extinct. In 1801 Yale University experienced a revival of Biblical Christianity under President Timothy Dwight, Jonathan Edwards' grandson. In 1801, **after seven years of preaching**, revival came to Yale. At least half of the student body was converted to Christianity under Dwight's Presidency. One college tutor wrote home to his mom, "Yale College is a little temple; prayer and praise seem to be the delight of the greater part of the students while those who are still unfeeling are awed with respectful silence."
  2. Rev. Charles Finney believed the gospel did not just get people saved, but it was also a means of cleaning up society. He and his followers worked to make the United States a Christian nation. Finney encouraged Christians to become involved in the antislavery movement. Christians became the leaders in many other social concerns such as education, prison reform, temperance, Sabbath observance, and women's rights. The large numbers of Christian workers for social reform became so influential they and the organizations they founded became known as the Benevolent Empire. The Second Great Awakening had a greater effect on society than any other revival in America.<sup>2</sup>
  3. When people turn away from God, a revival can turn them back to God. "Revival is like waking up from sleep. It's a new beginning of obedience to God." BB
- C. Today we'll examine the life of Nehemiah and see, Spiritual truth: One person can make a difference in calling a nation to return to God.
- D. Title: Return to God America, pt. -3

II. Everyone has a sphere of influence; Let's do what we can to call people to return to God.

- A. Context: **Nehemiah 1–2:8 (NLT)** Hanani...came to visit me with some other men who had just arrived from Judah. I asked them about the Jews who had returned there from captivity and about how things were going in Jerusalem. 3 They said to me, “**Things are not going well...** They are in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem has been torn down, and the gates have been destroyed by fire.” 4 When I heard this, **I sat down and wept. In fact, for days I mourned, fasted, and prayed...**
1. Broken walls were a symptom of a deeper problem: discouragement to complete the work of God, doubting God cared, struggling and spiritually stagnant.
  2. How does what’s going on in America affect you? Vacation shooting in Fla., America’s failure in Afghanistan, hurricane devastation, skyrocketing covid. I believe God has removed his hand of blessing because of our sin. We need to do what Nehemiah did.
- B. **Vs. 5** Then I said, “O Lord...the great and awesome God who keeps his covenant of unending love with those who love him and obey his commands, 6 listen to my prayer...**I confess that we have sinned against you.** Yes, even my own family and I have sinned...8 “Please remember what you told your servant Moses: ‘If you are unfaithful to me, I will scatter you among the nations. 9 But **if you return to me and obey my commands** and live by them, then even if you are exiled to the ends of the earth, I will bring you back to the place I have chosen for my name to be honored...”
1. This was how Daniel prayed while Israel was in captivity: (1) Confession of God’s greatness, (2) Confession of sin, (3) Appeal to God’s promises.
  2. Every Christian should pray this prayer; it deals with the root cause.
- C. **Vs. 11** O Lord...Please grant me success today by making the king favorable to me...4 The king asked, “Well, how can I help you?”...5 I replied, “If it please the king...**send me to Judah to rebuild the city...**8...**And the king granted these requests, because the gracious hand of God was on me.**
1. Neh. was the king’s cupbearer. God put him there so he could help people return to God. // **All of us have been put in position or given something by God to help people**, e.g., a boy gave his lunch and Jesus fed 1000’s, an orphan, Esther, was made queen and used her position to save the Jews from annihilation and Timothy Dwight was president of Yale. You and I are teachers, baseball coaches, fellow employees, neighbors...all in position to call people we know to return to God.

### III. **Everyone who calls people to return to God will face opposition.**

- A. **[Nehemiah 2:10 (NLT)]** But when Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite official heard of my arrival, they were **very displeased** that someone had come to help the people of Israel.] They made fun of them, tried to fight, caused confusion, lied about them, set traps for them, lied to the government about them, prophesied against them and tried to make them afraid.
1. Sanballat was the governor of Samaria and Tobiah was a wealthy governor of Ammon. They were men of power and wealth. More importantly they were pawns in satan’s hands on assignment to stop Nehemiah from doing God’s work.
  2. Nehemiah’s response: **[Nehemiah 6:9 (NCV)]** Our enemies were trying to scare us, thinking, “They will get too weak to work. Then the wall will not be finished.” **But I prayed, “God, make me strong.”**] Then he acted. If we try to help people return to God satan will oppose us. count on it! But remember, **[1 John 4:4 (NCV)]**

My dear children, you belong to God and have defeated them; because **God's Spirit, who is in you, is greater than the devil**, who is in the world.]

IV. If we step out to call people to return to God, people will follow.

- A. Context: [Ne. 2:17–18 (NLT)] But now I said to them, “You know very well what trouble we are in. Jerusalem lies in ruins... Let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem and end this disgrace!”... They replied at once, “**Yes, let's rebuild the wall!**”...]
- B. People are looking for someone to follow. They'll follow people away from God and follow people to God. The Israelites followed a leader and built a golden calf but later followed Joshua around the walls of Jericho. It's the same today: the team follows the coach, students follow the teacher, neighbors show up when someone organizes a neighborhood watch. People will follow you when you call them to return to God.

V. We must learn from past mistakes and renew our commitment to follow God regularly

- A. Context: after the celebration after the wall was built they held a solemn assembly, [Ne. 9 (NLT)]... the people assembled again, and this time **they fasted and dressed in burlap and sprinkled dust on their heads**. 2 Those of Israelite descent **separated themselves from all foreigners as they confessed their own sins and the sins of their ancestors**. 3 They remained standing in place for three hours while the **Book of the Law of the Lord their God was read aloud to them**. Then for three more hours **they confessed their sins and worshiped the Lord**... 16 “**But our ancestors were proud and stubborn, and they paid no attention to your commands**... But you are a **God of forgiveness, gracious and merciful, slow to become angry, and rich in unfailing love**. You did not abandon them... 32 “**And now... God do not let all the hardships we have suffered seem insignificant to you. Great trouble has come upon us... 33 Every time you punished us you were being just. We have sinned greatly, and you gave us only what we deserved**... 36 “**So now today we are slaves in the land of plenty that you gave our ancestors... 38 The people responded, “In view of all this, we are making a solemn promise and putting it in writing... 10:29... They solemnly promised to carefully follow all the commands, regulations, and decrees of the LORD...**”]

1. We must keep focused on following God every day. If we get off track, confess our sin to God, repent, ask forgiveness and get back on track.

VI. Conclusion One person can make a difference in calling a nation to return to God.

- A. Pictures<sup>1</sup>: Approx. 2.2 billion people have heard the gospel from Billy Graham. He shared the gospel with more people than anyone else in history, but who shared the gospel with him? Edward Kimball was a Sunday school teacher who sought to win his class to the Lord. One young man didn't seem to understand what the gospel was about so Kimball went to the shoe store where he was stocking shelves and confronted him with the importance of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. That young man was Dwight L. Moody. In the stockroom, he received Jesus Christ as his Savior. In his lifetime, Moody touched two continents for God, with thousands professing Christ. Under Moody, another man's heart was touched for God, Wilbur Chapman. Chapman became an evangelist who preached to thousands. One day, a professional ball player attended one of Chapman's meetings and Billy Sunday was converted. He quit baseball and became part of Chapman's team and later began his

own evangelistic crusades. A young man was converted by Sunday whose name was Mordecai Ham. He became an evangelist and preached in Charlotte, North Carolina. A young man, in high school, went to hear him preach. He responded to the invitation and Billy Graham was converted. He became an evangelist who preached to more people than any other person who ever lived.<sup>1</sup>

- B. One person can make a difference in calling people to return to God. Billy Graham's conversion started in a shoe store and America was changed. Yale University had revival because a college president stood for Jesus. American culture changed during the 2<sup>nd</sup> Great Awakening because Christians got involved. It can happen again if you and I follow Nehemiah's example and do what we can to call people we know to return to God.

## VII. Response

- A. Prayer
- B. Souls

## VIII. Bibliography/ Resources: Logos Bible Software and Library, Platinum Edition, was used to prepare this message.

1. <http://www.travisagnew.org/2013/07/22/the-chain-of-events-for-billy-grahams-conversion/>
2. <https://www.christianity.com/church/the-2nd-great-awakening-11630336.html>
3. <https://www.christianity.com/church/church-history/timeline/1701-1800/yale-founded-to-fight-liberalism-11630185.html>