

Nehemiah 8:1-18

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[0 : 00] Turn to the Old Testament book of Nehemiah chapter 8. I bless my heart to hear everybody singing in that way.

! If that's all that God had for me this morning, I would be content. And I hope and pray He has much more for us. Nehemiah chapter 8.

We're going to read the chapter together, beginning in verse 1. And all the people gathered as one man into the square before the water gate.

And they told Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses that the Lord had commanded Israel. So Ezra the priest brought the law before the assembly, both men and women, and all who could understand what they heard.

And on the first day of the seven month. And he read from it facing the square before the water gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of the men and the women and those who could understand.

[1 : 09] And the ears of all the people were attentive to the book of the law. And Ezra the scribe stood at a wooden platform that they had made for the purpose. And beside him stood, we'll say six men to his right without reading all those names, and seven men to his left.

Verse 5. And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was above all the people. And as he opened it, all the people stood. And Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God.

And all the people answered, Amen, Amen. Lifting up their hands. And they bowed their heads and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground. Also, thirteen other men that were Levites helped the people to understand the law while the people remained in their places.

This is verse 8 now. They read from the book from the law of God clearly, and they gave the sense so that the people understood the reading. And Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people, said to all the people, This day is holy to the Lord your God.

Do not mourn or weep. For all the people wept as they heard the words of the law. Then he said to them, Go your way, eat the fat and drink sweet wine, and send portions to anyone who has nothing ready.

[2 : 24] For this day is holy to our Lord. And do not be grieved, for the joy of the Lord is your strength. So the Levites calmed all the people, saying, Be quiet, for this day is holy.

Do not be grieved. And all the people went their way to eat and drink, and to send portions, and to make great rejoicing, because they had understood the words that were declared to them. On the second day, the heads of fathers' houses of all the people, with the priests and the Levites, came together to Ezra the scribe, in order to study the words of the law.

And they found it written in the law, that the Lord had commanded by Moses, that the people of Israel should dwell in booths, or tabernacles, during the feast of the seven months. And that they should proclaim it, and publish it in all their towns, and in Jerusalem.

Go out to the hills, and bring branches of olive, wild olive, myrtle, palm, and other leafy trees, to make booths, as it is written. So the people went out, and brought them, and made booths for themselves, each on his roof.

And in their courts, and in the courts of the house of God, and in the square at the water gate, and in the square at the gate of Ephraim. And all the assembly of those who had returned from the captivity, made booths, and lived in the booths.

[3 : 29] For from the days of Jeshua, the son of Nun, to that day the people of Israel had not done so. And there was very great rejoicing. And day by day, from the first to the last day, he read from the book of God.

They kept the feast seven days, and on the eighth day, there was a solemn assembly, according to the rule. Let's pray together. Father God, we praise you again for Christ, and we thank you that he was the word of God, a physical manifestation, a thing that we could tangibly touch, and see of who you are.

And we thank you also that your word is the same. The very words, that it was both written by men, but inspired by you. So we could say, who wrote the book of Nehemiah?

Probably Ezra. With a bit of Nehemiah's input. But we could also say, who wrote the book of Nehemiah? God wrote the book of Nehemiah. So I pray, Father, this day that by your spirit, you will speak to us from your word.

That we will approach it with expectation, in trembling, because we get to meet with our God. We pray this in Christ's name.

[4 : 41] Amen. So to catch some of you up, which by the way, it's very good to see. Many of your faces I haven't seen in a while. It's always hard sometimes to preach, and catch people's faces I haven't seen in a long time, because I really want to stop and go, oh hey!

I'm going to try not to do that this morning. But to catch you up, the book of Nehemiah, where we've been, we've seen that God has brought news to Nehemiah, who was wintering in Susa, as cupbearer to the king, Artaxerxes, the king of Persia.

And he brings news of the state of God's people. And God's people are in a bit of a shambles back in Jerusalem. The wall has yet to be rebuilt. They've been back from exile now for some 90 years. And they're still in a poor state. And the issue for Nehemiah is not that the city is not rebuilt, but that the condition of the people are not in good repair. And in this day, the way that God was glorified, the way that people saw who God was, was by how his people were doing.

The same is true today of the church. This is the way people gaze upon the glory of God, see the redemptive work of Christ, is in the state of his people.

[5 : 51] Not in the building of cities and grand walls to protect ourselves, not in massive amounts of trade, but we have a new set of standards, a new way by which we live. And that's this holy calling that we've been called to.

To be holy and to bring about holiness in the life of others. So, Nehemiah's heart is moved by this report. God moves in him and grieves him and moves him to prayer in chapter 1.

We see Nehemiah sovereignly placed in this unique position as cupbearer to the king. Certainly, to be able to bring influence, to be a trusted friend of the king as the one who tasted his wine.

We've seen him request of the king, and the king, for no good apparent reason other than God's work in his heart, gave permission to Nehemiah to go back and rebuild the wall, which was to go against an edict that he had issued some years earlier to stop the building of the wall.

Not only that, but King Artaxerxes gives a blank check. He gives him his own credit to go and get the materials he needs for the building of the wall. It's recorded here in Nehemiah chapter 1, verse 8.

[6 : 58] Nehemiah's words, For the good hand of God was upon me. We see this work, this sovereign work. So, Nehemiah's now returned. He's surveyed the wall.

He's rallied the Israelites to rebuild. They've rebuilt the wall. 52 days this work was completed. And yet the work to be done in Israel has yet to really begin in its entirety.

And here we see the beginning of that. The bringing about of revival amongst the people. Now, let's say to you, we see it recorded here in chapter 8.

Kind of what seems to be the official beginning of that. And many commentators would say that we had a physical work taking place up until this point. And now here is when the spiritual work begins. But I say to you that spiritual work has been going on already. We see that God has been working and moving amongst the people. The fact that they even rose up to build was a mighty work of God.

[7 : 57] The evidences of what God was doing in their heart is in the building. And now we see it ramp up to a whole new level. This revival that comes about.

But before we move on, we have a bit of a problem. I think a problem of definition. definition.

Because when I say the word revival, lots of different things may spring up in your mind.

I hope to show you over the next few weeks what ought to be springing up in your mind when we see this. The word revival or to revive appears throughout the scriptures. It is used on occasion to speak of those who have been sick or even dead and were brought back to life.

But more often it is used to speak of the bringing about of a new burning, a new desire for God in the hearts of men. We see revivals happen throughout the scriptures no less than ten times in corporate ways.

This being one of them. Revival in the scriptures has affected whole nations. People groups. We see that to be true throughout history today, throughout the history of the church.

[9:04] our own country experienced a revival known as the Great Awakening led by men like George Whitefield and Jonathan Edwards. This is the revival that we are talking about.

A couple of quick quotes for me. One from Andrew Murray says, A true revival means nothing less than a revolution. Casting out the spirit of worldliness, making God's love triumph in the heart.

J.I. Packer said, Revival is God's quickening visitation of His people, touching their hearts and deepening His work of grace in their lives. This is something we should long for.

Revival is when God comes close to earth and God's people respond appropriately. Now that's not to say when we're not in a time of revival that God's not at work, that God isn't working amongst His church.

But it seems, if we look at history, that God visits in special ways at particular times the church. And I think, this is just Nathan's opinion, but I think that the American church is poised for a revival right now.

[10:14] As we see it on the continual decline, both in number and in fervency, I believe it's time for a new close swinging of God to bring about repentance and a return to Him.

In fact, for the past four or five years, it's been one of my major prayers to pray that revival would come and that God would use our church to help catalyze such a thing.

So this is what we mean by revival. A revival is not something that can be put on a calendar. All of this sounds good, and some of you with the wrong understanding of revival might say, well good, get the church calendar out.

We can make a sign. That is not revival. I went to a conference and the little introduction to the pamphlet of the conference stated that we were about to have a good old-fashioned Holy Spirit revival.

Great. I'm glad you have the power to bring such a thing about. But we don't. We have no ability of our own to bring about revival. Revival is the sovereign work of the Spirit of God.

[11:24] So hear that. Revival is the sovereign work of the Spirit of God. However, I want to show you four evidences of God-sent revival.

I want to show you four things from chapter 8, chapter 9, and chapter 10 in the coming weeks that are evidences of God-sent revival. And certainly, if this is what the people of God do when God comes close, visits them in a special way, ignites their hearts, ought we also endeavor to live in this way?

We should, right? We should want to do these things. Let me give you all four of them and then we're going to address the first two today. If revival is God-sent, God's people will be praying.

That's number one. If revival is God-sent, God's people will reestablish the Word of God as the ultimate authority in their lives. Number three, if revival is God-sent, God's people will recognize their defiance of God and view His chastisement as just.

And number four, if revival is God-sent, God's people will turn from their defiance to obedience.

These are things that we are all commanded to press into anyway, right?

[12:44] But hear me carefully, right? This is not a set of presuppositions that if we do these things, then revival will come. These are just the evidences of the God-sent revival.

So let's look at the first two together. Just kind of a precursor, number one. If revival is God-sent, God's people will be praying.

We see evidence here of Nehemiah's prayers. I'll tell you, in fact, when I set out to preach through the book of Nehemiah, I thought it was very timely for our church in a kind of a growing transitioning stage to talk about the work and the effort that needed to go into things.

I honestly, as many times as I had read through Nehemiah, we had done a study together, the men did, a couple of years ago through the book of Nehemiah, I never saw how prevalent prayer was throughout the book.

That God starts by moving Nehemiah to pray on behalf of his people. So we have Nehemiah's prayers. I believe there are ten recorded prayers in the fourteen chapters.

[13:49] Nehemiah's prayers, chapter one, verse five through eleven, chapter two, verse four, chapter six, verse nine, and again in verse fourteen. We see the Israelites' prayers, chapter four, verse nine, and then here in our text, chapter eight, verse six, we see a prayer led by Ezra, and I have to tell you honestly as I studied all this the past couple of weeks, I wish we had more details.

I wish I had a record of the prayer that is prayed. It simply just says, and Ezra, bless the Lord, the great God. And here's the response of the people as they joined in.

And all the people answered. Thirty to fifty thousand people, scholars say, were the Israelites' numbers at this time. And all the people answered, Amen, Amen, or let it be, so may it be.

And they say it twice to give emphasis to that type of thing. And so here even at the very beginning, when the book of the law is open to be read, it begins in prayer.

Jesus prayed. Well, I'll take an example from him, shouldn't we? Just look at one example of Jesus' prayer. Luke 6, 12. In these days, he being Jesus, went out to the mountain to pray.

[15:02] And all night, he continued in prayer to God. When was the last time you devoted yourself to prayer in that way? Paul instructed the Philippian church to pray.

Philippians chapter 4, last half of 5 and 6, The Lord is at hand. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.

We do not have because we do not ask. A.T. Pearson, a wonderful pastor and biographer, wrote my favorite biography of George Mueller, which my father handed to me at an early age.

He said, From the day of Pentecost, there has not been one great spiritual waking in any land which has not begun in a union of prayer. He also wrote, Wherever the church is aroused and the world's wickedness arrested, somebody has been praying.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon said, Whether we like it or not, asking is the rule of the kingdom. If you may have everything by asking in His name, and nothing without asking, I beg you to see how absolutely vital prayer is.

[16:16] Jonathan Edwards, one of the great pastors of the Great Awakening, who was a man who wasn't very entertaining in his delivery. We talked a bit about that last week, and I may address it more today.

His preaching was steeped in prayer. Content-driven and steeped in prayer. In fact, often he stood at the very back of their meeting places and read very dryly a manuscript.

But it was said that people would cling to the pillars and the backs of the pews in the church in fear that the floor would open up and they'd be swallowed into hell because of the great high view they had of God's holiness.

He wrote, Matthew Henry, the great commentator, said, when God intends great mercy for his people, the first thing he does is set them a praying.

You probably can remember that one, I hope. When God intends great mercy for his people, the first thing he does is set them a praying. Prayer is vital for our Christian living.

[17:40] Certainly, if we want to see revival come on this land. So if revival is God sent, God's people will be praying. If revival is God sent, God's people will reestablish the word of God as the ultimate authority in their lives.

Beloved, we neglect the very word of God to us. We have it in abundance. And maybe the fact that we have it in abundance is one of our problems.

that we have so many different versions of it. So many different study Bibles. So many different bindings even on our Bibles themselves. You may have your favorite that you carry around, but you probably have a shelf of them at home.

In places in the world where the Bible is scarce, where the word of God there aren't copies that exist, I am told that people are desperate to hear it. We'll walk for days.

We'll ride bicycles. will sit for hours and hours and hours to hear the preaching of it. We'll weep and rejoice that they get to hear words from the Almighty God.

[18:53] And yet many of us struggle to sit and open it once a day and read from it for 15 minutes. We neglect this precious gift that was given to us.

Paul wrote in 1 Thessalonians 2.13 And we also thank God constantly for this. that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it, not as the word of men, but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you, believers.

Paul's thanksgiving was overflowing in his writing that they accepted that this was in fact the word of God. Hebrews 4.12 I hope you're familiar with, says, for the word of God is living and active. It's sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

The word of God is the spirit's instrument. It is the tool that he uses to bring correction and direction in our lives. The spirit of God begins working in the hearts of men by first drawing his sword from its scabbard.

[20 : 10] That is the word of God. It is the supreme rule and authority for our lives. Many people give lip service to the sufficiency and efficacy of the Bible, but yet do not read it.

In their very actions they deny what they say with their lips. Many people, as they look for direction in this world, will take small bits of biblical wisdom and add to it a bit of pop psychology to arrive at their decisions.

Some will take small bits of biblical instruction and add to it some business methodology. Some will take small bits of biblical guidance and add to it the opinions of a friend.

Beloved, the Bible is to be the guide and rule of our lives. We need to re-establish it as the ultimate authority.

Proverbs 8, 32-34, the Lord speaks here and says, And now, O sons, listen to me. Blessed are those who keep my ways. Hear instruction and be wise, and do not neglect it.

[21 : 20] Blessed is the one who listens to me, watching daily at my gates, waiting beside my doors. In Luke 11, 28, Jesus says, Blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it.

God's God's people will recognize this. They will treat the word of God as the ultimate authority. And there will be no revival amongst people who do not love and read and hear and proclaim the words of the living God.

We see that to be the case. This work that's happening by the Spirit is moving in the Israelites, this mass number of people to reestablish it in this way.

And I want to show you from the text today four observations in this regard. Firstly, take a look at their eagerness. Take a look at their eagerness to see from the word of God.

The law we're told here, the books of Moses, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy. That's what's being read at this time.

[22 : 30] Notice at the beginning of chapter 8, all of the alls, I've got them underlined here. Verse 1, all the people gathered.

Verse 2, both men and women and all who could understand, which I take to mean children, he's adding this detail for us, that even the children were there, those who could hear what was being said and understand, and I would take that a step further to say, if all the people were there, he doesn't make a caveat for nursery workers.

So it probably means that the infants were there as well because all the people were there being able to hear the instruction. They weren't stuck off in some room or a building someplace else at a different gate in the city, but they were all gathered together so that all could hear the instruction. Look at verse 3, all the people were attentive, eager to hear what God may say. Verse 5, all the people, for he was above all the people.

The prayer, all the people answered. It goes on in this way. The people of God were eager to hear the words of God.

[23 : 46] Note 2 in verse 1, that it's not that Nehemiah and Ezra got together and made a plan to have a big rally. They wanted a conference to take place, so they put together this massive conference that they built the stage that he was going to stand upon so that everybody could hear the reading of the law.

But the people did it. Verse 1, and they told Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses the Lord had commanded Israel. They told him to bring it. They said we have this event that's going to happen at the water gate and we want you to come and bring the copy of God's word that you have and read it to us.

They built a platform. There was some planning that went into this thing. It wasn't a spontaneous gathering of all the people of Israel. Word had gone out. There had been a seeking, a gathering.

Can you just imagine from Ezra's perspective what a wonderful thing this would have been?

Because remember that Ezra has been back in the land now for 14 years faithfully carrying out the duty of a priest.

He had been teaching the word of God for 14 years. This is an encouragement to me. I'm going to continue to plot on and teach the word of God to people in the hopes that something like this happens one day.

[25 : 01] What an amazing thing. He receives an invitation. Please come read the word of the law to us. All of us. We're all going to be there. We built you a big stage that you can stand way up on because we want everybody to hear the words of God.

We know you've been plotting on and teaching these things and pushing forward. And in fact, that they even knew that they ought to gather was a work of Ezra.

Notice that it was a very particular day. We get the record here. It's not just for our dating, but it's the first day of the seventh month. And the Israelites knew, I would argue, because of Ezra's teaching to them, that there was a prescribed feast that was to happen on this day.

It's called the Feast of Trumpets, or if you prefer in Hebrew, Rosh Hashanah. You guys heard that term before, I'm sure. The Feast of Trumpets. And it was a day that the Israelites were meant to rejoice.

They were supposed to play trumpets all over Israel. It was meant to be going on. It was supposed to be a big thing because nine days later was the Day of Atonement. The day when the high priest would take sacrifice into the Holy of Holies and make sacrifice for the people of Israel.

[26 : 12] this symbol, this action that took place, which told us of the coming great sacrifice. That is, Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, the one that could fully and finally take away the sins of his people.

This was the day that they were coming together to celebrate, built a stage for it, and said, come and read the Word of God to us. Notice in verse three, the time frame that this happened in. First, that it happened from early morning. We start meeting at 1030, and sometimes that is a real struggle. They had the whole family up and ready to go.

We don't know exactly what early morning means, but we do know that this event took place from early morning until midday, which meant literally noon. So five to seven hours this took place.

I try really hard to keep these sermons at 45 minutes for you guys. We may need to devote ourselves in a higher degree to God's Word.

[27 : 20] We may be a little bit numb to it, and not desire it, and not be eager enough to come and hear its teaching. And then notice in verse 13 that this didn't end here.

It wasn't just this day, just this five to seven hours, but on the second day, something else happens. And this time, all the heads of the father's houses, they come together, and they said, I'm postulating to Ezra, we can't keep getting everybody together every single day.

It's just not going to work. There's no way that you can read in this way all of these days. So we're going to come together and let you crash course us on the law, and we'll take it back to our houses. So notice that there in verse 13, and we see that they discover some things along the way. There was a great eagerness amongst the people to hear and to learn, to love, to proclaim the word of God.

Notice secondly, their reverence. Verse five, Nehemiah ascends the stage, he opens up the book that he has with him, and all the people stood.

[28 : 34] That's the record. As he opened it, all the people stood. Now, I'm not suggesting that that's something that we ought to do, that we have to stand for the reading of God's word.

Many people do practice it in this way. Many denominations, that is a normative thing. When the word of God is read, everybody stands. It's the practice done that way. What I care about is the heart of what's going on when the word of God is being read.

I don't really expect you to tune in to every single thing that I say. The words that come out of my mouth are the words of Nathan. My hope is, and my great desire throughout the week is that I'm simply explaining to you the same way men did here, the words of God.

But how many of you just zone out when the word of God is being read? I labor to read well in the hopes that you'll hear the things that are happening in the word of God.

How many of you do other activities during a sermon? Fill in all the little O's in the text. You see somebody's Bible that's like that?

[29 : 49] Some people doodle, it helps them listen. My wife's one of those. You ever see my wife doodling? She's paying attention. That's a good thing. How many of you get extremely distracted and you have no reverence for the very words of God?

Notice that the reverence goes beyond just the standing and the listening. We don't know if they stood up for this entire period of time. I would guess not. That would be a challenging thing to do. However, what's probably happening here, and again, I wish I had all the details, but you notice that he had six men on his left and six on his right. I can't imagine what it's like to try to read to a group of 30,000 to 50,000 people.

What kind of energy it must take to read out loud with no PA system and simply just trying to project yourself as best you can over a group like that. I'm sure that it was exhausting.

I love my Sunday afternoon naps. I am tired after I get up and do this. I want to go rest. And here they are for an entire morning doing this. And so I think what's happening, my best guess, is that they're taking turns doing this.

[31 : 01] That there's a process by which the word of God is being read. And Ezra is not the only one reading, but he steps aside and somebody else reads. And in fact, you saw that there were 13 other Levites.

And we see that they have this process they go about that they read from the book, from the law of God clearly, and they gave the sense that the people understood the reading. That's verse 8.

And so what's more than likely happening is there's a process happening that one of these men on the stage gets up, reads from the word of God, takes a break. So maybe everybody stood, heard from the reading, everybody sat down, and then these 13 Levites would go amongst the people and help them more clearly understand.

Just expound upon. That's what preaching really should be. That's the issue at hand when we talk about what is expositional preaching. It's simply that, just telling people what the word of God says, right?

Not piecing it together to reinforce what we want to say, but simply looking at a text and saying, this is what the word of God has to say for you. This is what we're supposed to be doing with the word of God.

[32 : 04] This is what God means with what God said, and that's the process that's taking place here. But notice that beyond the standing, right, however that was, if they stood the whole time or stood and sat, whatever may have happened, they worship in other ways as well.

And it would seem that it would have been foreign to them and probably foreign to anybody who's experiencing revival that they would hold back anything from God. And I am guilty amongst you of this.

Right? When I am moved inside, I tend to keep my arms down. Right? We're a pretty boring group of people. And I don't mean that as an offense to you at all. Right? It may be just perfectly fine that we're that way.

But notice the people here, they lifted up their hands, they bowed their heads, and they worshiped with their faces to the ground. Right? Which was a position that gave reverence to, that communicates that we are not worthy to be in the presence of the Holy God.

They gave all of themselves in their reverence to the Word of God being read. Notice also their responsiveness.

[33 : 10] So their eagerness, their reverence, and their responsiveness. Notice. Look now further on, down to verse 9. The second part there says, For all the people wept as they heard the words of the law.

All the people wept. It wasn't a little group, first couple of rows, that really were being affected by this. You know, the 50,000th man in the very back wasn't twiddling his thumbs waiting to get a meal.

Right? All the people were being affected by this reading of the Word. And as Ezra and possibly other men read, they were seeing and beholding the holiness of God.

And they were seeing how very, very, very short they fell of this objective. They're seeing their own condition. The way that they had offended God. As the Word of God was being read, an ever-widening chasm was opening up.

As if they're standing or you're still on a bank that's giving way and it starts to crumble and you take a couple steps back and it just keeps crumbling, it just kept crumbling and crumbling and crumbling. The expanse between them and God got bigger and bigger and bigger and they wept.

[34 : 25] They responded to the Word of God. They saw it as a communication. God was speaking to them and they responded. There should be an appropriate response to the teaching of the Word.

Now notice what's said to them. What the instruction that's given to them as they're weeping, right? There's this weeping and mourning going on and Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught said to the people, and we see it in three different places, chapter 9, excuse me, verse 9, verse 10, and verse 11.

This day is holy to the Lord your God. Do not mourn or weep. Verse 10, go your way, eat the fat and drink sweet wine and send portions to anyone who has nothing for this day is holy to our Lord. And do not be grieved for the joy of the Lord is your strength. Verse 11, be quiet for the day is holy. Do not be grieved. The day is holy. The day is set apart.

Don't grieve. The day is holy. The day is set apart. Don't grieve. It was probably a great surprise to Ezra, to Nehemiah, to the Levites that when they came together on a day, remember the day of trumpets, a day that was supposed to be a day of great joy, right?

[35 : 34] That's why it was set apart. It was prescribed by God to be a day of rejoicing and celebration. Why? Because the day of atonement was close at hand. So as they heard the law being read to them, and as that ever widening expanse was open to them, what they're saying to them is, don't be sad.

Let the joy of the Lord be your strength. The fact that in Him we have the redemption of our souls. Yes, the chasm is wide, but it has been closed by the goodness of our God.

That's what they're saying to them, right? This is a day set aside for joy. Now, that's not to say that they're writing off repentance, right? They're not saying contrition is not important.

We're actually going to see in chapter 9 a great deal of repentance over their sin. But this day was not for that. This was a day to celebrate the person and work of Jesus Christ.

They may not have realized that was happening on the Day of Atonement, but this is what that day was for. Fourthly, notice their obedience.

[36 : 45] This will be a full point, right? When God sends revival, we will obey the Word of God. But let me just point it out here as well. Note their obedience.

In verse 14, as they come back together on the second day and they open the book of the law again, they find something and they found it written in the law that the Lord had commanded Moses that the people of Israel should dwell in booths during the feast of the seventh month.

So this is called the feast of booths or sakat. It's a time between the feast of the trumpets and the day of atonement that the people were meant to dwell in booths, tabernacles, temporary shelters, if you will.

And it was to remind them of the sustaining work of God after He led them out of Israel. They were led out into the wilderness where they tarried for 40 years and God cared for them and provided for them in that time.

This was something that they were required to do as Old Testament Jews. And so what did they do? We see no record of a debate on whether or not it should take place.

[37 : 52] They just simply did it. One of the single greatest mark of Christian maturity is obedience.

Not what you know, but what you do with what you know. You understand that the Lord has commanded something and you simply do it.

Sometimes, with hesitancy, I teach you new things because when I teach you something new, you're held responsible for the thing that you know. You now know something to be true and therefore you need to be obedient to that truth.

But yet, I love you and I want you to be like Christ, so we need to keep pressing on together. It's a great mark of Christian maturity that we are obedient to the work, the words of God.

And notice the result of this, verse 17. Look at the result of their obedience. They're told to go away on this first day, right?

[38 : 52] To go and to rejoice. Something they're intended to go do. And then the result of their obedience, the record is, and there was great rejoicing.

The people of God set the Word of God aside as the ultimate authority in their lives. There will be great rejoicing.

We saw that blessed are those who hear the Word of God and keep it. This word, blessed, that Jesus uses doesn't mean abounding in stuff, right?

It means full of a joy that bubbles up from inside of us. That's not affected by the circumstances outside of us, but that is something that abides within us.

This is the type of joy that comes. Beloved, are we a joy-filled people? Blessed because we hear the Word of God and we keep it?

[39 : 52] Have we established for ourselves the Word of God as the ultimate authority in our lives? Let's pray together.