

HINDRANCES TO RENEWAL

When you speak of renewal, it will always be met with opposition.

Satan does not lose any sleep over half-hearted efforts at revival or winning people to Christ.

There is no revival without resistance. If you want to stir up demons then launch a program of activity in the church to reach lost people and renew backslidden people.

There is no revival without enemy engagement. No winning without warring.

The history of Ezra and Nehemiah is illustration of that truth.

You know the historical context in which they were written --- Israel in captivity. Persia conquering Babylon. Cyrus with his decree to set the people free and return to Jerusalem. 50,000 going back with Zerubbabel and beginning construction of the temple, giving up with discouragement for 16 years, only going back after encouragement of Haggai, building it to completion.

Then (Ezra), the descendant of Aaron, this scribe, this priest coming to not only finish out the building but to restore worship of Jehovah in that sacred place and to lead one of the most remarkable spiritual awakenings and renewals --- returning Israel to moral and spiritual life again that we know anything about in history.

Few years later, (Jehemiah) not a priest --- not a scribe --- but a layman, businessman, builder, a political leader in the court of the king of Persia --- coming at the call of God to rebuild the walls around the city which had lain in ruins for almost 100 years. With organization, power and the help God gave him --- completing that job in 52 days and joining with Ezra in that great spiritual rebuilding.

Not only brought Israel back to life again in buildings and institutions, but back to life spiritually in relationship to their God.

Their (experience) like that teaches us that when efforts like that are launched --- hindrances are certain.

When the people said let us arise and build and return to God ---

At the same moment you hear the enemy forces say let

us arise and oppose and object and hinder!

Many factors are here that will help us overcome hindrances in our day.

Five qualities are in evidence that led to the success in their day and also help us to find success in this day.

How do you overcome hindrances?

I. Bible Teaching

You can't read these two books without being impressed, how often these two men engaged in reading the word of God.

There was teaching in the book of the law.

Ezra 7:10, For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments.

7:25 Ezra set up judges to go throughout the land, not just to teach, but to teach those that did not know the law.

Neh. 8:1 Nehemiah and Ezra gather the people in a public place for a regular reading of the law.

And all the people gathered themselves together as one

man in the street that was before the water gate.

Bring the book of the law.

v. 2 And the priest brought the law before the congregation, both men and women and all that could hear with understanding.

v. 3 And he read therein --- from morning until midday --- and the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law.

v. 8 So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading.

That is not the only place in the Bible where you go to find the importance of the teaching of the word of God.

Josh. 1:8 This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do all that is written therein: For then thou shalt make thy way prosperous and then thou shalt have good success.

That is how to overcome hindrances --- plainly by the teaching of God's word.

Paul in Col. wrote it is to teach every man and bring

him into maturity.

Hebrews, says the Christians ought to teach.

Paul said to Timothy the gospel is carried forward by transmission. He teaching Timothy, Timothy teaching faithful men, who in turn would teach others, who in turn would teach others. Unbroken chain of teaching right down to this present moment where you and I can remember those who have taught us about Jesus.

No surprise that Jesus in the great commission said teaching them all things I commanded you.

Jesus was called a teacher 111 times in the Gospel accounts.

Teaching --- What we teach is given us --- Ezra and Nehemiah knew they must teach the law of God if an awakening was to come, as it did.

Dr. Philpot school in Ala. told how in one of the library restrooms a student had put a sign on a hand dryer, Push the button and (hear a message) from the college president, (hot air!)

It is not (just) teaching --- it's (what) you teach that is

important.

Our So. Baptist Seminaries are tied into teaching.

II. Binding Commitment

Ezra and Nehemiah both were men of this type and this is the only way to overcome hindrances.

Ezra 10:6 said he was a man who would not eat bread or drink water all night, mourning over the faithlessness of the exiles.

N. 2:10 Described by the enemies Sanballat and Tobiah, as one who had come to seek the welfare of the children of Israel.

These two men were known as men who laboured for God with no axes to grind. They had no personal agenda, no selfish interest, no vain ambitions, no desire for personal glory.

They were there to weep over the faithlessness of the people and lead them back to God.

To seek the welfare of Israel and nothing else.

No wonder the enemies quake with fear!

No wonder they were anxious and worried!

What can you do with men and women who have no other desire, other than to serve the Lord Jesus Christ.

That ought to be true of you and me.

Joshua led the children of Israel into the land of promise, did not show favour and not take a piece of land for himself until the very end at the insistence of the people. They loved him and respected him for it.

We have a lot to learn about that in our day --- Some church folks look after their own self-interest in a way that has nothing to do with the pattern of Jesus.

Heard about a boy who said I want to play darts with you daddy. Here is what we will do. I will stand here and throw and you stand there and say wonderful, wonderful.

When folks want applause they not only stand in the way, they become a hindrance. In a time in church when there are power plays and individual ambition.

Gilbert said, "God give us men, a time like this demands

strong minds and great hearts and true faith and ready hands. Men whom the lust of office doesn't kill, men whom the spoils of office cannot buy, men who possess opinion and will, men who have honour, and men who will not lie."

There is a need in spiritual awakening, a channel that God can use.

III. Bonafide Unity

Neh. 2:17 Nehemiah shared his responsibility with the people, "See the distress, how Jerusalem lieth waste and the gates are burned, come and let us build up the wall --- we have suffered this reproach long enough."

4:13 He organized the people, families standing together with weapons and tools, working to complete that task in 52 days.

It could not have been done without that cooperation --- unity --- sharing.

There is no such thing in these two books as a one man ministry.

Reason (Samson) failed in his day --- He had to do everything by himself! No people or army helped him. He faced

the enemy all by himself.

We are stronger when we depend on one another.

Folks in Jerusalem linking arms and lives together ---
There is not any independent spirit there. But in cooperation
and unity is the way to get the job done.

We are to help each other through. Cooperation increases
efficiency. Bible (math) says two working together is five times
more effective than two working by themselves. If one can
handle 1,000 then two can overcome not 2,000 but 10,000. There
is a kind of spiritual law there that says we are 5 times as
efficient when there is cooperation and unity as when we work
alone.

There is no such thing as one man independent.

S. D. Gordon said " a united church is an unconquerable
church."

Our church needs cooperative giving, unity in serving,
all pulling on the same rope and for the cause of the Gospel.
All working for an awakening.

IV. Beneficial Hard Work

(False rumors) always get around that certain churches reach folks because they have a secret --- a bus ministry, or children's church, or found the secret of soul winning.

Folks always looking for some automatic tool to bring a renewal to their church.

You know that it is the Holy Spirit and providences of God. But Ezra and Nehemiah teach us that it involves diligent hard work.

For a church to reach people, that church must follow the pattern here --- involvement in studying God's word, in visitation door to door, witnessing, involvement.

Neh. 4:21 We laboured in the work and half of them held the spears from morning till the stars appeared.

v. 22 Let every one lodge in Jerusalem and be a guard for us who labour by day.

v. 23 So neither I, nor my brethren which followed me --- none of us took off our clothes save that for washing.

The verse that tells the real story of this renewal is v. 6 (For the people had a mind to work.)

Not some
" one
but ALL

Some people seek an easy road, but there is no easy way ---
as Ezra and Nehemiah, it takes hard diligent work.

Paul said "This one thing I do."

V. Believing Prayer

All through these two books is prayer.

Ezra 8:21 Pouring out his heart, asking God for a right
way for Israel.

Ezra 10:1 When Ezra had prayed and when he had confessed,
weeping and casting himself down before the house of God and
the assembled people wept with him as he prayed.

Neh. 1:4 He said when I heard of the needs of God's
people I sat down and wept and mourned several days and prayed
before the God of heaven.

v. 5 I beseech thee O God of heaven, God that keepeth
covenant and love them that observe your law.

v. 6 Let thy ear be attentive, thy eyes open and hear the
prayer of thy servant --- I pray day and night and confess the
sins we have sinned against thee.

Chapter 4 one of talking to God.

These two men talked to God --- They knew God was a personal reality. Someone they could talk to --- Someone who would encourage them, who would say don't be afraid, I will be with you as I was with Moses, Joshua, and I will be with you.

I'll see you through!

Out of that kind of relationship with a personal God, hindrances don't make any difference.)

What is an obstacle if God is beside you saying don't be afraid, I will be with you, I will see you through.

Artaxerxes the king, who is he when you have with you the king of kings.

Sanballat, Tobiah, enemies of God, what are they when God is there every day.

Discouraged people can pray and God will give them the strength to say "we have a mind to work."

Over and over again in these two books is that you don't have to be alone. You can have God in power and force when you

know how to pray.

Power in a name. You have been some place and someone call your name. They have your attention and even redirect your plans.

You have that power --- God has said you call upon me.

He said pray in my name --- He did not give us a secret number, nor through a dull receptionist.

We have the freedom to call on his name and his name is above every name --- power in prayer.

Hymn - Titled → In the Garden --- Some musicians did not want that in --- *A New Hymnbook*
One said it's too self-centered --- It says He walks with me, talks with me, one (member committee) said that makes me think about The Lord is my Shepherd --- Makes me to lie down --- That got it in the book.

That's not self-centered --- That is the privilege everyone has --- As though we were the only person that Jesus died for, for whom God is concerned.

He talks with me --- I never have to be alone.

Audit income tax --- Nothing hid or wrong. Receipts --- Hands folded --- C. P. A.

God promised to see you through. A paraclete --- Someone to stand with you. The Holy Spirit will be there in judgment. We never, never have to be alone.

Renewal will come when we get back to Bible teaching, binding commitment, unity, hard work and believe in prayer.

Where do you fit in this story -- Are you on the side of Sanballat or Nehemiah?

Do you need Renewal? -- Repent? -- Rededicate? -- Baptized?

I have said what Ezra & Nehemiah said -
first - Bible Teaching - Pay Attention to what God's Word says -
second - Binding Commitment - No other deities than his & some Jews -
third - Bornful unity - Pull People with God's people -
fourth - Bornful Hard Work - No Easy Way - A Mind to Work -
Fifth - Believing Prayer - Reality of Personal God.

Will you take that 1st step this morning?
" " Come to Profess your faith publicly in Christ - To Repent of your sins & Believe on Him?

This is a Time of Renewal - for you to come - Joining the Church -
Moving your letter -
coming for Baptism -

Whatever your decision - if you are not a Baptist, but you say you are a Believer & want to belong to this church -- Come on. I would like to talk to you about how you become a member of this church. - We will receive you - Just come on - we have a place for you - ⁻¹⁴⁻ Would you come Now?