

NEHEMIAH ... a man controlled  
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(NEHEMIAH 5-12)

Every true revival rests upon the Word of God. One may not always be sure of the methods to be used, nor of the type of instrument to be chosen; but it is indisputable that each time God's people have been brought to heights of spiritual triumph, the Bible has regained its place of authority. The rebuilding of Jerusalem was of paramount importance; but unless the completed task were supported by the radiant living of the builders, the walls would fall once again into a state of disrepair. Revivals can never last unless their foundations go deep into the will of God.

God's Day had to be kept Holy!

" And all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the street that was before the water gate; and they spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses . . . and he read therein . . . from the morning until midday . . . And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people . . . and when he opened it, all the people stood up. And Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God. And all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands: and they bowed their heads, and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground" (8:1-6). Every day the people came to receive guidance from the sacred book; and as long as this practice continued, great gladness rested upon the community. We need to learn from their example, and recognize that spiritual health is only maintained by daily contact with the Word of God. " In those days saw I in Judah some treading wine presses on the sabbath . . . and I testified against them " (1 3: 15; cf. 10: 3 1). The man who honors God's day respects God's wishes, and seeks daily to be well-pleasing to Him. This is the hall-mark of revival. The Christian who journeys from Jerusalem to Jericho will soon get a heartache-and a headache too!

God's Tithe had to be Brought

It may be easy for a man whose income goes into the higher wage bracket to tithe, but the people of Nehemiah's day were for the most part exceedingly poor. If ever men could have argued against the requirements of the law, the inhabitants of Jerusalem could have done so. Yet it is worthy of note that the people whose hearts had been revived, never thought of argument. They recognized their indebtedness to God; they saw the need for means to maintain the service of the sanctuary, and although they were very poor indeed, a tenth of all they possessed was willingly laid at the feet of the Lord (see 10:34-39). A religion unable to reach the depths of a pocket is superficial and useless. An increased offering was insufficient -God asked for a tenth of what He supplied; and when His people failed to honor their obligations, He accused them of being thieves. "Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings.... Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it" (Mal. 3:8-10). If God permitted a tithing Christian to be financially embarrassed, He would lose His character. Sacrificial giving opens windows in heaven, for God says, "Give, and it shall be given unto you."-

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God's People had to be Separate

It would appear that the command, "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers," was as important in ancient days as it should be today. Many Christians are violating the commands of God in regard to this important matter. It is written that the people under Nehemiah's control made a covenant saying, "... we will not give our daughters unto the people of the land, nor take their daughters for our sons" (10: 30). Young people should study this chapter before they marry unbelievers; businessmen should heed the command before they become linked with others in bonds which are not pleasing to God. An unholy alliance in business might lead to increasing wealth; an attractive husband or wife might lead to momentary joy; but it is not possible to remain truly happy in one's relationship with God when the commandment is being broken. The people of old recognized these important facts, and bowed down before the will of God. Thus He was able to pour His blessing upon them, and soon "... the joy of Jerusalem was heard even afar off."

The Holy Bonfire

During my visit to Winnipeg, Canada, I had the good fortune to meet the Rev. Cyril Hunt who, prior to the Communist seizure of China, worked as a missionary with the China Inland Mission. This devoted servant of Christ was chairman of the committee that organized my evangelistic services, and I shall ever be grateful to him and his colleagues for the magnificent way in which they supported their visiting preacher. Mr. Hunt was a man of wide experience, and anticipating that he might have thrilling stories of China, I asked if he could remember any occasion when a Chinese church was stirred greatly by the power of the Holy Spirit. He thought about my question, and later handed to me a piece of paper upon which he had written a few notes about Mr. Wang.

The Rev. Timothy Lui had been brought from Chekiang Province on the east coast to conduct evangelistic services in Central China. He was an acceptable preacher, and everywhere he ministered churches were helped. After one of his appeals for conversion and re-dedication, between twenty and thirty souls stepped forward to confess their faith in Christ. Mr. Wang was among the number. He was troubled; his conscience urged that he had failed his Lord. This young Chinese Christian owned a hardware business, and had been fairly prosperous; but the entry of Japanese troops into his province provided temptation, to which Mr. Wang succumbed. Dispensing with his normal commodities, he began selling liquor and alcohol, and soon greatly increased his profits. Mr. Wang prospered, but at the expense of his soul. The sermon that evening reminded him of his folly, and greatly disturbed, he resolved to re-dedicate himself to the service of Christ.

This man was so well known that soon everyone knew what had taken place. The following night, when Cyril Hunt was leading the community singing, the local minister asked permission to give a testimony. There was silence when he confessed he had failed his Master. As the tears streamed down his face, he said that Mr. Wang's repentance had revealed a similar need in his own soul. Turning again to the song leader, he asked if they could go out into the church courtyard and continue their service in the open air. Mr. Hunt led the congregation outside, where they stood in a

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circle; and it was then that the great bonfire was lit. Mr. Wang and his widowed mother brought baskets of cigarettes and large quantities of wine. Other inflammable materials were gathered, and soon the fire was blazing. Mr. Hunt confessed that this was the greatest fire he had ever seen; and the wonderful repercussions which followed stirred the entire city of Wuhu. At one stroke Mr. Wang destroyed his prospects of becoming wealthy. The coming of the Japanese soldiers opened a new field of trading for this young Christian, but realizing his soul was becoming sinful, Wang renounced it all. The following night, when the preacher appealed for souls, the front of the church was inadequate to provide room for those who responded. Hundreds of men and women tearfully confessed the desire to surrender to the Lord Jesus Christ. Where people could kneel they did so, to ask God's forgiveness; others stood in corners, around the platform, and wherever they could find room. The power of God flooded the church, and revival became the daily experience of the assembly. One man had cleansed his temple, and the ensuing consecration brought a new Pentecost to the people.

This method has always been the highway to revival. It is possible to organize special meetings, to spend great sums of money on advertising, to expect a visiting evangelist to perform miracles. He undoubtedly will do his utmost toward that desired end; but more often than not, will only succeed in breaking his heart. Revival begins in the house of God. When the Lord's people begin to recognize their own needs; when sin is confessed and renounced; when God sees that Christians really mean to be completely consecrated, the Church will be in the position to expect anything.

" If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land" (2 Chron. 7: 14).

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