

A True Revival Meeting

by John Greer

The sermon emphasizes the importance of worship in true revival and the characteristics of true revival, including urgency, spontaneity, and unity.

Duration: 40:58

Scripture: 2 Kings 16:10-14, Ezra 3, Psalm 51:10, Jeremiah 29:13, Matthew 6:33, Acts 2:1-4

Topics: "Unity Among Believers", "Overcoming Fear"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of unity among believers. He highlights that unity is a priority and a mark of the Holy Spirit's work. The preacher refers to the gathering of the people in the seventh month as a sign of urgency and unanimity. He also addresses the issue of intimidation faced by believers in a hostile world and false religion, emphasizing that the blood of the Lamb and the victory of the cross are the answer to overcoming fear and intimidation. The preacher encourages believers to focus on the atoning work of Christ and to seek refuge at the altar.

Transcript

...together please, and let us put our hearts before the Lord, and let us all seek His face in prayer. Our blessed God and our Father, we bow again in Thy holy presence, in the name of Thy dear Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. And we approach Thee rejoicing that Christ Himself is our mercy seat.

We thank Thee that it is to Him that we come, and it's through Him that we come, as we enter into the presence of a thrice holy God. We rejoice that Christ is our high priest, He is our sacrifice. We thank the Lord that He offered Himself without spot unto Thee.

And we rejoice that He has prevailed and has triumphed in that great work of redemption. Father, Thy word tells us that Christ being come, and high priest of good things to come, has entered within the veil, not with the blood of cows and goats, but with His own precious blood, having obtained eternal redemption for us. Gracious God, we bow before Thee and we give Thee thanks tonight that we are privileged to assemble here, we are privileged to come together in this fashion, to sing Thy praise, to worship Thee in prayer, and then around the word.

Lord, we rejoice that it is our blessed opportunity again to come and pour out our souls and plead with our God for His work and for His testimony, for the witness that's carried on through this congregation, throughout our sister churches, and among others of like precious faith. Lord, how we thank Thee tonight

for the blessed position that we have in Christ. And we thank Thee, Lord, for all that we enjoy by virtue of our union with Him.

Lord, we pray that tonight we will experience in our own hearts much of the blessing of God as we assemble here and wait before Thee. Lord, we need a touch from Thee. We need the anointing of God.

We need the blessing of heaven. We need the quickening of the Holy Ghost. And we pray, Lord, that Thou wilt hear us to this end.

O God, we thank Thee that it is indeed the experience of the believer to encounter hindrances in coming to the mercy seat. And, O Lord, it is a battle and a conflict so often. Thou hast not said to us in Thy word that we shall not have battles or difficulties, but, Lord, Thou hast told us clearly that we will encounter the rage of the enemy, the opposition of hell.

O Lord, we shall experience the conflict and we are therefore not unaware of the devil's devices. Thy word reveals to us the efforts and the schemes that he concocts against the people of God. And, O Lord, we pray that Thou wilt make us a people who know how to put on the whole armour of God and to stand in Christ and to pray in the victory of the cross.

Pray, Lord, that as we come to Thee tonight to pray, when we have looked at Thy word, that we will know what it is to be let out by God the Holy Ghost. Pray, Lord, that Thou wilt deliver us from ourselves. Deliver us, Lord, from vain ritual and from the mere thoughts of our own hearts.

No, God, give us words that are from the Holy Ghost. And, O Lord, we pray that Thou wilt take us up the holy hill of Zion to prevail with our God and to lay hold upon Him. O help us tonight, Lord.

We are poor and needy. Think upon us. Come to our aid.

Strengthen us out of Zion. Strengthen us with strength in our souls. And, Lord, bless us mightily, bless us richly.

And breathe on us from heaven itself. As we continue before Thee now, here is an answer prayer. Lord, may Thy name be glorified this night.

For we pray this for Jesus' sake and for His glory. Amen and Amen. Returning to the book of Ezra.

Ezra chapter 3. Ezra chapter 3. And we'll read together from verse 1 of the chapter. Ezra chapter 3 and the verse number 1. When the seventh month was come and the children of Israel were in the cities, the people gathered themselves together as one man to Jerusalem. Then stood up Joshua, the son of Josedach, and his brethren the priests, and Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, and his brethren, and built up the altar of the God of Israel to offer burnt offerings thereon, as it is written in the law of Moses, the man of God.

And he set the altar upon his bases, for fear was upon them because of the people of those countries. And they offered burnt offerings thereon unto the Lord, even burnt offerings morning and evening. They kept also the feast of tabernacles, as it is written, and offered the daily burnt offerings by number, according to the custom, as the duty of every day required.

And afterward offered the continual burnt offering, both of the new moons and of all the set feasts of the Lord that were consecrated, and of every one that willingly offered a freewill offering unto the Lord. From

the first day of the seventh month began they to offer burnt offerings unto the Lord. But the foundation of the temple of the Lord was not yet laid.

They gave money also unto the masons and to the carpenters, and meat and drink and oil unto them of Sidon and to them of Tyre, to bring cedar trees from Lebanon to the Sea of Joppa, according to the grant that they had of Cyrus, king of Persia. And we know that God will bless the reading of his own infallible and precious word. It is undoubtedly true that what took place in this first return from Babylon was a revival of the worship of the God of Israel.

For many decades the testimony of the Lord lay in a most desolate state, both physically and spiritually. The city of Jerusalem was in ruins, the temple had been destroyed, and the cause of God with regard to outward appearance seemed to be well-nigh extinct. And therefore it seemed highly improbable, probable, highly unlikely, that revival would ever take place, that there ever would be a restoration of the things of God as the Lord's people had known them in times gone by.

But while his earthly testimony was in this decadent state, the Lord had not forgotten his own promises, and he had not abdicated his own great purposes. And therefore he had determined to prepare the way for a reviving and a restoring of the testimony and the cause of truth and righteousness in order to the appearance, the eventual appearance of his own Son, the Messiah. And therefore that initial preparation for the coming of the Messiah necessitated the restoration of the Lord's people to their own land and the reinstatement of the testimony of God, which means that when the set time had come that the Lord had indeed appointed, he visited his people and he set things in motion and all that was necessary for the accomplishment of his will began to take place, began to come to pass.

And therefore the revival that was sorely needed became a remarkable reality. Now we've already considered in these studies, in these opening chapters of Ezra, the decree of Cyrus and the release of the captives and then their return to the land. All of these details were of course momentous in nature and in essence.

They were absolutely essential to the reviving of the Lord's cause, but the actual revival itself we do not view until we come here into chapter 3. And this chapter is really the record of the beginnings of a great move of the Holy Spirit in the restoration of the work of God. There are actually two very clear sections in this chapter in which there are described for us two prominent features of this revival of the true worship and the true religion of Jehovah. In verses 1 to 6, part A, there is the reestablishment of the worship of God.

And then in verse 6b right through to verse 13, there is the laying of the foundation of the temple. And therefore, as is clearly indicated, the full establishment of the worship of God actually preceded the building of the temple. I've already told you that the book of Ezra is the story to some degree, to quite a degree actually, of the rebuilding of the house of God.

But isn't it very interesting that the worship of the Lord was actually restored before the temple was built? Before the house of God was erected? Before the foundation was actually laid? We actually read there in verse 6 at the end of the verse, but the foundation of the temple of the Lord was not yet laid. And it's not that those words are meant to be an indictment on the people of God or a minimizing of what had been accomplished. That's not the sense of those words, but the foundation of the temple of the Lord was not yet laid.

Rather, the sense of them is that we are being shown here that the worship of the Lord preceded. Somebody go and get that thing sorted out. Please.

The worship of the Lord had actually been reinstated before the building of the temple of God itself. You look with me at those opening verses and you will see how there's mention made of offerings and sacrifices and the building of the altar, and then it mentions that the foundation of the temple of the Lord was not yet laid. Now, what have we learned from that? We learned a very important truth, that the worship of God should be felt to be more important than the house in which it is observed.

That would be the reverse of the thinking of many, even the thinking sometimes of ourselves. What is more important, the worship or the place where it is carried out? The Lord is teaching us here that it is the worship of God. The correct worship of God, the right worship of God, the proper worship of God is exceedingly more important than even the very house in which it is offered.

And, of course, we can see that from not only this passage, but if you think of the history of the church, some of the greatest times of worshiping the Lord were experienced in very unlikely circumstances or surroundings, very humble and very lowly. I am not minimizing, of course, what we may have by way of buildings, but I am simply making a point here because the Word of God is making it, that we have got to see what the priority is, that it is indeed the worship of God being right and established and according to God's mind and God's truth and God's own precious Word. And when we come here to Ezra chapter 3, we find that the theme of these first six or seven verses is that of the worship of the Lord that characterizes true revival.

When revival comes, when God starts to move among His people, there will be worship that glorifies His name. There will be worship that brings praise to Him, that honors Him, that exalts Him. That's exactly what we should want to see and want to have in our... I have to smile.

And of course, there's that thing again. We're singing that hymn there of what various hindrances we meet coming to the mercy seat. And there we have one.

Anyhow, mercy doesn't draw your attention to it, but that can't help it, buzzing in my ear up here. Anyhow, we're showing here that when the Lord begins to move, there will be a worship that glorifies His great name. There was with me something here tonight about the gathering or the assembly of the people for worship.

It says in verse 1, And when the seventh month was come, and the children of Israel were in the cities, the people gathered themselves together as one man to Jerusalem. This was a public gathering or a public assembly. That's an important fact.

It's a very elementary one, but it's a very important fact because it is clearly revealed throughout the Word of God that the church is to assemble for public worship. And we're being shown here that when God begins to move, there's always a restoration of that. There will be a gathering before the Lord in a particular place, and there will be that assembly in that public fashion for the purpose of meeting with the Lord.

It was a public gathering. It is also what you might call a priority gathering because notice what it says there. The people gathered themselves together.

What we want to notice there is that they saw their gathering as a priority. Nothing was to take precedence to their assembly to worship the God of heaven. There was obviously an interest in assembling.

Furthermore, there was a keen desire to meet with the Lord. There was a yearning to meet with the Lord. And that point serves to highlight the current prevailing coldness and indifference among so many who profess the name of Jesus Christ.

It seems that among many, and I'm not talking now about liberal churches or other churches. I'm talking about the free Presbyterian church. Among many within our own ranks, there seems to be a total indifference with regard to the importance of gathering before God.

It is basic, it's elementary, but how frequently that principle is violated. Let me tell you, the only way for it to be overcome is for God to start to move in the hearts of those who profess His name. You may have read some of the great records of revivals.

And what we actually see here was so true of those times when God began to move and began to work in various generations and in different places. You notice here that this was a priority gathering and it was evident because their gathering here was marked by urgency. And that urgency is seen in the time that's in view.

It says in verse 1, when the seventh month was come. Now, the seventh month is to be looked on here as the seventh month of the year of their coming out of Babylon. And the interesting thing about that is that if we are looking here, and I believe we are, at a year that began as regards their coming from Babylon at the first month of that year, it would actually have taken these people about six months to make the journey from Babylon to Jerusalem.

And that's verified by the fact that over in chapter 7 where you read of Ezra, we'll not turn to it now, but now you read of Ezra himself in the second return traveling from Babylon to Jerusalem. And his return took four months, and the congregation that came with Ezra then was much smaller than the 42,000 people who came here in that first return. And the point I'm making is, it would have taken this larger congregation, whether it's described or recorded for us, to make their way from Babylon to Jerusalem.

All who came then took them four months, therefore it would have taken these people much longer. And the point therefore that's made is that no sooner were they in Jerusalem and having a settlement made for themselves that they went to Jerusalem and they gathered together, they met first immediately. In their hearts, to get to the place of meeting with the Lord.

It was a top priority. And they wasted no time. They incurred no delay whatsoever in getting to meet with the Lord.

That's shown by the time. It's also shown by a token. In other words, it's very obvious that they left everything else aside.

Now these people are really a group of wanderers. They've come to a land that is desolate, to cities that need a lot of attention. And of course as far as Jerusalem is concerned, Jerusalem itself was in ruins.

And there was much there to be done with regard to their own physical welfare and their own material situation. But you will notice from this first verse that at this juncture they are so desirous to meet with God, so single-minded in that direction that everything else is set aside. Nothing is allowed to interfere with this

priority of assembling for worship.

And therefore we are being shown here very, very clearly that this priority of theirs was marked by urgency. There was an urgency in their hearts, in their minds, in their souls, evidenced by the time and by the token, as I've put it to you in these remarks. As I said, we may have read the history of revivals that God has sent in the history of the Church down through the centuries.

And it is thrilling to read those accounts because the gatherings of people then was completely spontaneous, were completely spontaneous. It didn't have to be urged. It was as it is here.

The people gathered themselves. No announcement was made. It's just the thing about man-made revivals.

I lived in, as you know, the United States and over there, churches, and they're very sincere about it, no doubt. I don't undermine her or seek to be derogatory, but there's sincerity. But they put up a big sign and they'll say, next month we're going to have a revival.

The word revival is very loosely used. And they put up this sign and say, from the 10th to the 12th of February we're going to have a revival. I'll show you how little they know about even the history of revival.

We don't plan revivals. We don't orchestrate them. We don't open them and close them.

God does that. But when God begins to move, and when He did move in those times to which I refer, it is to say, it's thrilling to read how the people just came without any invitation or any pressure on them. There was no need to announce it.

In fact, it wasn't that way. The people just came. And that's the kind of thing, kind of movement that we need, where there's a spontaneous, urgent gathering of the people together before the Lord, and that's put on their minds, meeting with God, worshipping God, hearing the Word, seeking His face, and coming before Him.

So this was a priority. It was marked by urgency. It was also marked by unanimity.

It says in the end of verse 1 that the people gathered themselves together as one man. That's unanimity. That unanimity was the sure indication that the Holy Spirit was moving.

Because, my friend, the Holy Spirit is the author of unanimity, or unity, one-mindedness. It says in Ephesians 4 verse 4, by way of instruction to the church, that we are to endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit. But He is the Spirit of unity.

And when He begins to work, He brings people together with the same mind, with the one heart and one intention. Isn't that what you see in the day of Pentecost? They were all gathered together with one accord. And the word there simply means with the same mind.

And that's what's going on here. The same mind, the same heart, the same desire. The Holy Spirit creates that and produces that.

Look at Psalm 133. And notice what it says there. It's a psalm that's well known to the Lord's people.

And it certainly speaks of unity. Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity. And then it says this.

It is like. So now the psalmist is giving us what you call a simile. It's like.

Like what? The precious ointment upon the head. Psalm 133 verse 2. Upon the head that ran down upon the beard and even Aaron's beard that went down to the skirts of his garment. Notice here how unity among the brethren is described under this symbol of the anointing oil that was poured on Aaron's head but ran down over his entire body.

Now that anointing oil is obviously a symbol of the Holy Ghost. And there and there the high priest is a reminder to us of the Lord Jesus Christ. And what's being taught in that statement about the unity of the brethren is that the Lord Jesus Christ was anointed by the Spirit of God and that anointing then we partake of it because we're shown here that it runs down over the head and down over the garments.

Over the entire body. And believers are anointed by the Holy Ghost by virtue of their union with the head. The Lord Jesus.

I was speaking yesterday morning in that old Bible class about the church about Christ being its organic head in the sense that He is the head and the church is the body. And there's a union between the two and therefore because of that union what Christ is given by the anointing of the Holy Spirit extends to His church. And we are anointed by the Holy Ghost as a consequence of our union with Christ.

The very anointing of the Holy Ghost is only because of their possession in Christ. We're not anointed by the Holy Ghost as some kind of a separate experience from salvation and our union with Christ. We receive the Holy Ghost in salvation to indwell us.

And then we are filled by the Holy Spirit as we seek the Lord in prayer also because of our union with Christ. And because of His obedience as our great High Priest. And therefore we are shown here that when the Holy Spirit does work and move and come upon God's people there's always unity.

There's unanimity. This priority here for assembling was marked by unanimity as well as urgency. But then look with me again about or at this gathering here and we notice that it was a pivotal gathering.

It was public. It's a public gathering. It was a priority gathering.

And then it was a pivotal gathering. This gathering here, this assembly in verse 1 of Ezra 3 is actually pivotal as we will see to the entire revival movement of that particular time. And that is seen in a number of ways.

For example, their coming together in the city here was not random but was actually at a divinely appointed place in the city. This helps us to see why this gathering was actually pivotal. They came to a certain place.

It wasn't a random choice. They came to the very site where God's house had stood and would yet stand again. And that is pinpointed by the reference here to the altar being set up.

It says there in these verses, if you go down to verse 3, and they set the altar upon His bases. And that takes, as you see, to the very heart, the very center of everything. That the temple represented.

The altar in view there is the altar of burnt offering. And there they set up the altar and there they worshipped the Lord. And therefore they're at the right place.

They are in the right location. They're in the very spot that God Himself had appointed to be the place where He would be worshipped by His people right in the city of Jerusalem. We know from Deuteronomy the Lord said there continually before they ever entered the promised land that there would be a place that the Lord would choose.

And that was a reference to this very spot. And therefore it was a chosen spot. It wasn't a randomly chosen spot, but one that was divinely appointed.

They came to the very location where God had ordained they should meet. And of course that spot where the temple stood and where the altar especially was erected was on Mount Moriah. Furthermore, it was therefore the place where Abraham offered up Isaac.

Because the temple was built right had been revealed to David. It was the threshing floor of Orni in the Jebusite. Just mention these facts from Israel's history.

Abraham offered Isaac there. David, remember, when he numbered the people, he was chastened by the Lord. And the Lord's wrath was turned aside because David built an altar and he offered up sacrifices.

And it was this very spot where it all happened. And actually it was in this very region where the Lord Jesus Christ Himself died. This very area where they now assemble and they meet before God in that appointed place.

And this means that the place of their assembling was a place that was intimately connected with Calvary and with the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. And that is why I say this was a pivotal gathering. Because it teaches us the lesson that when God begins to move and work in revival there will be a focusing in upon the cross and upon the work of our Savior.

The Holy Ghost will always bring people together to have their focus placed on that. On that blessed spot of all spots. The place called Calvary.

And on the blessed work that was done there through revival always brings that to pass. And we're seeing that reflected in this wonderful account. It was a pivotal place because it was a divinely appointed place that pointed to the cross.

It actually was in the location of where the cross was erected and where our Savior died. And in revival there's always that focus. Look there at verse 3. It says, He set the altar upon His bases.

And the language would indicate that the foundation or the actual spot for the altar was known. That's where they placed it. That's where they set it up.

I can't speculate and say that whatever may have been a pavement or some kind of a stone or whatever where the altar had stood before was actually still there. But the principle that's being laid down here is that when there's a real work of the Holy Spirit the gospel will be in the rightful place. You see, when you look at the history of Judah you will find the story of a man who moved the altar.

Look to 2 Kings a moment, chapter 16. 2 Kings chapter 16, verses 10. We'll not read them all, but you can read it sometime.

Verses 10 to 14, 2 Kings 16. The story there is that this man Ahaz, the king of Judah, he saw a heathen altar when he was in Damascus. And he thought he would like an altar just like that heathen altar.

So he had a pattern made of it, as verse 10 tells us. And then he got Uriah the priest who proved to be unfaithful. We're 2 Kings 16, 10 and 11 and so on.

Uriah the priest, he got it made. And you go on down with me to verse 14. And notice what it says.

And he brought also the brazen altar. That's the Lord's altar. Which was before the Lord.

From the forefront of the house, from between the altar and the house of the Lord. And put it on the north side of the altar. Now, what that verse is saying is, God's altar, which had stood in the house of God, was set aside.

And the heathen altar was placed in the position of prominence. And everything was inverted and distorted. There was essentially here the bringing in of another gospel by Ahaz.

That's what it signifies. The bringing in of another message. He brought in a heathen altar.

And he pushed the altar of God aside. That's what's happened so much in apostasy. The heathen altar, the other gospel is brought in.

And the true gospel is pushed aside. And is ignored. And there's another message preached.

Let me tell you, dear friends, that's the prevailing thing today. And there's only one power that will reverse that. And that is revival.

Revival results in the work of the cross actually being set in its rightful place as regards preaching and ministry. And the proclamation of what sinners and believers need to hear. There will be that refocusing.

You will find that Ahaz's son, Hezekiah, led a great revival. You can read that yourself sometime in 2 Chronicles 29. And one of the very first things that Hezekiah did was get rid of all that Ahaz had done.

And restore things to their rightful place including the worship of God and the altar of God and the offering of the sacrifices. Hezekiah saw a great moving of God in his time. And everything was brought back to where it ought to be.

And my friend, that's the mark of a moving of God. Whether it be large or small. And we should think about that very carefully.

Some people think that revival is a lot of hype and euphoria and great feelings and all the rest of it. When God moves, there's always a restoring of things to their rightful place. And that has to happen in our own hearts.

That's why we need personal revival. Because is it true that the focus on the cross can be kind of pushed aside and other altars are set up in our own hearts? Other idols are brought in. Our idols are brought in and we set our attention and our affection on earthly things not on Christ and on heavenly things.

We need personal revival to get things in their rightful place where the Lord would have them to be. And then it was a pivotal gathering as I close because it dealt with the intimidation of the enemy. Look again here at verse 3 of Ezra 3 and it says And he set the altar upon his bases, for fear was upon them because

of the people of those countries.

Now the reference here to this fear is a reference to intimidation. On the part of the enemies of God and His truth. They did not want the temple rebuilt as later portions of Ezra show so clearly.

And therefore they are already at their devilish work. They're trying to instill fear into these people. They're seeking to intimidate them.

They've no sooner arrived And they no sooner have met to worship God than the enemies at work. And one of the enemy's great methods of attacking the saints is to intimidate them. And instill fear into their hearts.

So what do they do? They set the altar upon his bases for fear was upon them. You see my friend that they set up the altar where it should be set up. We've covered that but here is the specific reason.

Because they felt intimidated. And what was their response to the intimidation of the enemy? It was to gather before God. It was to assemble around that altar and offer their sacrifices.

You will find right down these verses. In verses 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6. You will find in each verse a reference to burnt offerings. That was the main offering.

Why is there such a focusing on the burnt offering here? To remind us that revival deals with the intimidation of the enemy. By causing God's people to focus on the cross. The cross is always the answer.

To put it this way, the blood is always the answer. To the fear that the enemy would instill in your soul. The intimidation they would bring upon you.

When they felt intimidated, this is what they did. They got to the altar, the sacrifices were made, the burnt offerings were presented to the Lord. And that meant that the blood was shed and the atoning work was done.

And that was the answer to the intimidation of their enemies. My friend, I feel that today God's people are very intimidated. By a hostile world.

And by a hostile religion. Because the intimidation that the enemy would bring against the saints of God is always inseparably linked to false religion. There is a false religion in our land.

The ethos of which permeates everything in society. Politics, the media. Everything is permeated by this false religion.

This desire to have everybody together in a false unity. And is deliberately opposed to the true unity of God's people. But because it's everywhere, God's people often feel intimidated.

The cry is today that you've got to join in. And you've got to go along with whatever prevailing notion there is or philosophy or view. Wherever it might be.

In the political realm, in the religious realm, the social realm. If you're going to get on, you've got to go along with the crowd. And it's like this new religion.

This ecumenism. That's just not in the churches, it's everywhere. And true believers feel intimidated.

How are we going to manage? We've got to get away, we've got to go along with them, you know. Otherwise we'll never get anywhere. That's to feel intimidated.

It's a very real thing. What's the answer to it? The blood of the Lamb. Standing into the victory of the cross.

Prevailing over that intimidation by focusing on what is our victory. It's Christ. And all that He is.

And all that He means to His own dear people. May the Lord write this in our hearts. As we have thought about this assembling, this gathering, these points about it.

May the Lord write these thoughts upon our hearts for His own glory.

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