



## Sermon Notes, 25 July 2021

**Term** Summer 2021

**Series** Preparing for ... the New Start (Ezra & Nehemiah)

**Gatherings: the 11, the 5**

**Title** transformation part 2

**Preacher** Paul Langham

### Reading – Nehemiah 7:53b – 8:12

Following on from last week, today we consider how we can pursue the Holy Spirit's transforming work in ourselves and in our church family.

The first thing to note is that, to the people of the bible, those two (individual and community) are indistinguishable in the sense that transformation happens to both ...

We see two keys in this passage – unity and the Word of God

#### 1. UNITY

8:1 *all the people came together as one ...*

*Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:3)*

The Greek word translated *keep* is *téreo*, from *tēros*, the word for a guard. So this is a call to active service, literally to guard duty – not of some earthly treasure, but one of heaven's greatest gifts.

#### 2. THE WORD OF GOD

In this passage, we see that the word of God does 4 things, which it is still doing today

##### 1. Feeds us

*Jesus answered, 'It is written: "Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God."' (Matthew 4:4)*

Jesus to Peter John 21: *feed my flock ...*

##### 2. Recalibrates us

... around the reality of God ... our faith is to be on and in him

This draws forth our praise: Nehemiah 8:6 & 9:5-6

##### 3. uncovers us

In v. 9 we see that the people weep as they listen to the word of the Lord. God's Word recalibrates the reality about me, my need to acknowledge & confess my brokenness. But confession brings instant forgiveness and is a joyous event (Acts 3:19) rather than a place to live ... *for the joy of the LORD is your strength*

##### 4. Restores and reshapes us

Nehemiah 9 presents an interwoven pattern of scripture, worship and confession, leading to action. In the Bible, if you don't act on what you've heard you weren't listening. See the following scriptures:

<sup>24</sup> *'Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. <sup>25</sup> The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. <sup>26</sup> But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. <sup>27</sup> The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.'* Matthew 7:24-27

<sup>22</sup> Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. <sup>23</sup> Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror <sup>24</sup> and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. <sup>25</sup> But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom and continues in it – not forgetting what they have heard but doing it – they will be blessed in what they do.  
James 1:22-25

Finally, the Word of God can only do all this through the work of the Holy Spirit, so let us ask him to do his work within us.

## QUESTIONS

- what am I doing intentionally to keep the unity of the Spirit which God has given to Christ Church? Am I alive to the Spirit's promptings about anything (speech, behaviour, attitudes) which are working against that unity?
- How consciously am I allowing the Holy Spirit to use God's Word to feed me – to feed my mind, my heart, my will?
- How consciously am I allowing the Holy Spirit to use God's Word to recalibrate me – to restore to me the truth of his nature and character?
- Am I in danger of seeing faith solely in terms of outcomes? In other words, seeing faith as what I put into the process in order to secure what I want / need from God ... rather than seeing faith as primarily to do with a fuller, truer appreciation of God himself ...
- How consciously am I allowing the Holy Spirit to use God's Word to uncover me? Do I regularly acknowledge to him my sin and brokenness and my need of the forgiveness which only Jesus, through his blood, can bring me?
- Am I prone to making the place of confession a residence rather than a place I visit regularly, but with the sole business of laying the sin I need carry no longer before the cross?
- How consciously am I allowing the Holy Spirit to use God's Word to restore and reshape me? Am I doer of the word or just a hearer? (James 1) If I were a blank canvas and God's Word his palette, are there some paints or colours I'm reluctant for him to splash on? For example, do I hear what the Word of God has to say about gossip [insert something appropriate to you] but refuse to act on what I hear?