

The South Florida Avenue MESSENGER

A Friendly Church With a Vital Message Proclaiming the Unsearchable Riches of the Lord Jesus.

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SUNDAY SERVICES

Bible Study.....9:30 a.m.
Worship.....10:30 a.m.
Evening Worship.....6:00 p.m.

WEDNESDAY

Ladies Class.....10:00 a.m.
Bible Study.....7:00 p.m.

HOME OF

Florida School of Preaching

MISSION FIELDS

Dub Hill.....Russia
Don Iverson.....India
Marc Veary.....Malawi, Africa
Graham McDonald..Scotland
J. Paguaga....Honduras, C.A.
Joey Treat.....Pacific Islands
Ted Wheeler.....Ghana, W.A.

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IN
SEARCH
OF THE LORD'S WAY

Sundays @ 8:30 a.m. Check local listings

What Made God's Remnant Faithful?

Brian R. Kenyon

True to Jeremiah's prophecy, the children of Judah were taken into Babylonian captivity for seventy years (Jer. 25:11-12). In so doing, they joined the ten Northern tribes who had been taken into Assyrian captivity over a hundred years earlier (2 Kgs. 17:6-8). However, at the end of those seventy years, God did "perform My good word toward you, and cause you to return to this place [the promised land]" (Jer. 29:10). What characteristics made the returning remnant under Nehemiah's leadership faithful and pleasing in the eyes of God (Neh. 8:1-18)? Whatever they were, God's people today would do well to imitate them.

They Wanted to Hear God's Word

The remnant in Nehemiah's day were united in their desire to hear God's word (Neh. 8:1-2). Their eagerness to hear God's word was evident. They gathered "as one man," which indicates they were united in this purpose (cf. Ezr. 3:1). "The Water Gate" mentioned may have been part of the wall itself, but exactly where it was may not be known other than it was a public place that was conducive to speaking and hearing the word of God. "All the people" that gathered would have included men and women. The people requested that Ezra bring "The Book of the Law of Moses, which the LORD had commanded Israel"! They did not want to hear a new hermeneutic or a "latter day revelation." They wanted to hear the word that God gave to Moses! Ezra did not disappoint. He brought the Law before the assembly, including children (cf. Neh. 10:28). We must never underestimate the value of having children in our assemblies. They learn more by observing adults and asking questions than they do in a back room playing "church" (cf. Ex. 12:26-27; Deut. 4:6; 6:6-7; 31:12-13). Do we, like the remnant in Nehemiah, really want to hear the word of the Lord?

They Were Attentive to God's Word

Ezra gave the people what they wanted. "Then he read from it in the open square that was in front of the Water Gate from morning until midday, before the men and women and those who could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive to the Book of the Law" (Neh. 8:3). "The open square [street, KJV; broad place, ASV]," was a conspicuous place where all could hear (cf. Pr. 1:20-23; 8:1-3). Ezra read at this location from "morning until midday." Note the positioning of God's spokesman. Ezra "stood on a platform [pulpit, KJV] of wood which they had made for the purpose" (Neh. 8:4a). The word translated "platform" literally means "tower." This platform, which was deliberately built because the people wanted to hear God's word, was large enough to accommodate Ezra and his companions; and it was high enough to be clearly seen by all. Ezra was *(continued on page 2)*

(continued from page 1) accompanied by thirteen other men (Ezra 8:4b). How many of us would be willing to listen to God's word being read for this length of time? How attentive are we to God's word when it is being read, preached, and/or explained?

They Had Respect for God's Word

The remnant showed their respect in at least three ways. First, when Ezra "opened the book in the sight of all the people . . . all the people stood up" (Neh. 8:5 cf. Neh. 8:7b). Note again the recurrence of "all the people." Standing was a way of showing respect in the ancient Near East (cf. Job 29:8; Est. 8:4), as it is in parts of our culture. Do we show our respect for the word of God by at the very least paying attention to its proclamation? Second, the remnant showed their respect for God's word by agreeing to it. When Ezra "blessed the LORD, the great God . . . all the people answered, 'Amen, Amen!'" (Neh. 8:6a). This double "Amen" emphasizes the remnant's wholehearted agreement with the word of God (cf. Neh. 5:13; 1 Chr. 16:36). Do we show our respect for the word of God by agreeing to what it teaches? Third, the remnant showed their respect to the word of God by praising Him for it. The people accompanied their double "Amen" with "lifting up their hands. And they bowed their heads and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground" (Neh. 8:6b). The remnant truly understood their condition and the grace of God in giving them instruction through His word. Their immediate response was to worship God. Do we respect God's word enough that we praise Him for revealing His mind to us in the Bible?

They Were Teachable

Before examining the remnant's response, it is important to note that because the people wanted to hear God's word, were attentive to God's word, and had respect for God's word, Ezra and the thirteen men that stood with him took advantage of the opportunity to deliver what the remnant wanted and needed to be faithful—the word of God! "So they read distinctly from the book, in the Law of God; and they gave the sense, and helped them to understand the reading" (Neh. 8:8). This verse summarizes the kind of preaching God has always wanted. "Read . . . distinctly" carries the idea of translating at sight and giving the meaning. In the margin of the American Standard Version, an optional translation is given, "read . . . with an interpretation." Perhaps we can compare this to a preacher reading the word "propitiation" and immediately explaining it as he continues reading. "Gave the sense" means that Ezra and his companions told their hearers what the text meant, which requires proper handling of God's word (cf. 2 Tim. 2:15). "Helped [caused, KJV] them to understand" involved not only clarity in delivering the word, but also clarity in giving the proper application (cf. Acts 8:30-35). Like the remnant, we need to be teachable, and our preachers and teachers need to accurately communicate God's message and its application!

They Responded to God's Word

Hearing and being taught God's word is not enough to be faithful. We must also put to practice what God's word teaches. Those returning under the leadership of Nehemiah exemplify the proper inward response to God's word. First, they were saddened (Neh. 8:9b), which was a good sign because it showed "godly sorrow" (2 Cor. 7:10 cf. Mt. 5:4; Jas. 4:9-10). Second, since the reading of God's law should also bring joy, the people were told, "This day is holy to the LORD your God; do not mourn nor weep . . . So the Levites quieted all the people, saying, 'Be still, for the day is holy; do not be grieved'" (Neh. 8:9a, 11). Then, after being given specific instructions to joyously honor the Lord (Neh. 9:10), the people celebrated "because they understood the words that were declared to them" (Neh. 9:12). The thought of our sin and its result in separating us from God should break our hearts (Isa. 52:1-2 cf. Ps. 51:1-4). However, we should also be overflowing with joy, knowing that when we truly repent, God has promised, "I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more" (Jer. 31:34)!

The remnant also responded outwardly. On the day after the events described above, the leaders of the remnant "found written in the Law, which the LORD had commanded by Moses" instructions about keeping the Feast of Tabernacles, or Booths, which they had not kept for about a thousand years (Neh. 8:14-15 cf. Ex. 34:22; Lev. 23:39-43). The remnant did not make excuse; they did not harden their hearts to God's demands; and they did not delay in doing what God prescribed (Neh. 8:16-17a). Their outward response was not just from a sense of duty, but also "there was very great gladness" in that they had an opportunity to correct their old ways and do the will of God (Neh. 8:17c).

Conclusion

When people want to hear God's word, are attentive to it, and have respect for it, their response to it is predictable (cf. Acts 8:30-38; 10:33-48). Are we a part of God's faithful remnant today? Do we want to hear God's word? Are we attentive to God's word? Are we respectful of God's word? Do our outward actions reflect the proper inward response to God's word? When we learn more of God's word, may we, without hesitation, simply adjust our lives and follow it. ♥ Brian

SFA FAMILY MATTERS

Prayer List

Our Members: Melody Baxter had a mild stroke, Chuck Wyatt is home from the hospital recuperating due to back pain. Jacqueline Dopwell's chemo treatments are working. The cancer is shrinking some. She has 7 more treatments and then will be re-scanned. Please also keep Jim Turner, Ginny Hamby, Joe Dopwell, Kenny French, Genifer Johnson, JoAnn Hoback, Carol Eason, Elizabeth Tubbs, Jim Edmondson, Dorothy Trice and Margaret Coone in prayer.

Relatives: Wayne Hendrix, Tonya Mathis, Dee Moore, Margie Bolding, Blanche Dopwell & Dayne Romine.

Shut In Members: Virginia Plumlee, Ann Howard, Dick & Joyce Burbage, Janet Crosby, Don Starks and Duane Nelson.

Upcoming Events

Saturday December 3rd: Ladies Brunch here at South Florida Ave. at 9:00 a.m. Please come and join us for fellowship, fun and food.

Sunday December 4th: Fellowship In-Service following the evening service. Please bring finger foods.

Saturday December 17th: Annual Christmas party at the Sweeney's at 5:30 p.m. Please bring finger foods, drinks and a gift if you plan on participating in the fun and crazy gift exchange.

Hither, Thither and Yon

Its good to have Pam Share with us. Please keep all those traveling for the holidays in your prayers.

Christmas Stockings

Rene Bingle is making Christmas stockings for children in a shelter. If you would like to participate, a list of items is in the foyer and are needed by December 4th.

Visitors

Tiffany, Sam and Megan Hash, Peter Saunders, Nellie Anderson, Amanda Patterson, Victor Travis and Alexis, James Turpin, Terry & Betty McCormack, Leslie, Evan, and Isaac Rollins and Donna Nelson.

 Tune into AM 1330 (station WWAB) with your friends and neighbors every Monday from 5:00-5:30 p.m. for the "Way of Truth" program. This is a joint effort to evangelize involving Terrance Brownlow-Dindy (of 6th Street) and our own Hiram Kemp. Let's point our community to the Bible!

SCHEDULED TO SERVE

December

Frank Hamby **Table** Jimmy Sweeney
Matt Willcut **Assist** Kyle Williams

Sunday, November 27, 2016

9:30 A.M.

Song at Bible Class Kyle Williams
Prayer Paul Romine

10:30 A.M.

Announcements Jimmy Sweeney
Song Leader Jason Hendrix
Opening Prayer Fred Strickland
Sermon Hiram Kemp
Closing Prayer David Deal

6:00 P.M.

Song Leader David Williams
Opening Prayer David Anderson
Sermon Hiram Kemp
Greeters The Kenyons
Att. Cards Paul & Ian
Closing Prayer Tyler Anderson
Open & Close Building Charles Paulin

Wed. November 30, 2016

Song Leader Bill Long
Opening Prayer Steve Hunley
Closing Prayer Charles Paulin

Please meet in the library. If you cannot serve, please call Chuck Wyatt so he can get a replacement - 859-5231 or 602-9005

Sunday, December 4, 2016

9:30 A.M.

Song at Bible Class Frank Hamby
Prayer Stacey Paulin

10:30 A.M.

Announcements David Williams
Song Leader Jason Hendrix
Opening Prayer Kenny French
Sermon Hiram Kemp
Closing Prayer Antonio Martin

6:00 P.M.

Song Leader Tucker Sweeney
Opening Prayer Jeff Bingle
Sermon Hiram Kemp
Greeters The Longfellows
Att. Cards Paul & Ian
Closing Prayer Paul Romine
Open & Close Building Bob Cooper

Wed. December 7, 2016

Song Leader Jason Hendrix
Opening Prayer Steve Hunley
Closing Prayer Bobby Sheemaker

~ HOW ARE WE GIVING ~

Oct. 30	\$5,709.36
Nov. 06	\$5,565.20
Nov. 13	\$3,894.00
Nov. 20	\$4,152.00
Contribution Average		\$4,928.61
2016 Weekly Budget		\$4,422.60

Who Do You Trust?

The story is told about a little boy whose cat climbed up a tree, got scared, and could not get down, at least that's what the boy thought. So he climbed the tree to rescue the cat. As soon as he reached the cat, zoom! The cat swiftly climbed down with great confidence and agility. The little boy then contemplated his circumstance, and he became too scared to budge. Neighbors tried to coax him down but to no avail. Finally, one of them called the police. When the officer arrived, he borrowed a neighbor's step ladder and climbed almost where he could reach the branch where the boy was holding tight. The officer tried his best to get the boy down but, again, to no avail. About when everybody's patience was running thin, the boy's dad pulled into the driveway after work. He, seeing the commotion, walked over to the tree. As soon as the boy realized who it was, he immediately let go of the tree into his dad's open arms. Although the neighbors and police officer were good people, the boy did not trust them like he did his dad. Do we have trust issues? Maybe other people in the past have consistently let us down, and so we have built resistance toward trusting anyone else. God is one who will *never* let us down! Thus, as the psalmist declared, "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths" (Proverbs 3:5-6). When faced with fear, the psalmist said, "Whenever I am



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The End of Your Search for a Friendly Church . . .

(continued from above) afraid, I will trust in You. In God (I will praise His word), In God I have put my trust; I will not fear. What can flesh do to me?" (Psalm 56:3-4). We can trust God in our most intense trials. Job's attitude is worthy of emulation: "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him" (Job 13:15). Surrounded by his enemies, David wrote, "O my God, I



Save the Date!

YES Weekend, Feb. 24-26, 2017

THIS YEAR'S FOCUS WILL BE ON THE IDOLS THAT COME FROM OUR HEARTS—WHAT ARE THEY AND HOW DO WE DEFEAT THEM!

Happy Thanksgiving



Time with
**Friends
Family
The Lord**

trust in You; Let me not be ashamed; Let not my enemies triumph over me" (Psalm 25:2). Even when we have to "go against the grain" in the face of a vast majority, we can trust God. Hezekiah made great reforms among God's people. Why? "He trusted in the LORD God of Israel ... he held fast to the LORD; he did not depart from following Him, but kept His commandments" (2 Kings 18:5-6). No matter what the situation may be, God's way is best and He will "back up" our confidence in Him when we trust His will. As Jesus told the apostles, "I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20). ❤️ *Brian*