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## **The Thirst Quencher**

Boldly proclaimed...Clearly Explained

A number of years ago I ran across an ad in a Youth magazine describing yet another translation of the Bible. It goes, "Have you ever wondered when somebody was going to put the awkward and formal wording of the Bible into a language that today's generation can understand? Well, we are introducing the Valley Bible, It preserves the accuracy the Bible while eliminating ambiguous phrases like, "I don't believe you" or "that makes me upset" Were talking the Valley Bible, Bible to the max. Then they give an example from Luke 15. (READ Story) There is a quote from F.F. Bruce Jr. "yeah, a really tubular Bible...Pick up a copy, fer sure."

I think that Valley Bible version would be more confusing than others that use an older style of English...but do you ever find yourself reading the Bible and not understanding what all of it means and then not reading the Bible at all. Maybe sometimes you find yourself going several days, maybe weeks, without picking up your Bible and reading the Word of God? Is spending more time in the Word worth our investment of energy? I believe when God's people spend time in God's Word...it plows the ground for God to plant revival. Spending time in God's word readies our lives for growth to reignite the flame. Revival is not for those who are unbelievers, it's for the saved. One cannot reignite that which is dead. Renewing refreshment comes only to believers who are rooted in the fertile soil of the Bible, the soul source and foundation of our lives. My purpose this morning is to encourage God's people to spend more time between the pages of God's Word. To spend more time reading the Bible. Is there a thirst in you for reading the Word of God?...Why not? I ask myself this same question? Why am I not always thirsty for God's Word? This morning we are going to look at one of the first revivals in the Bible. We will see God's Word Boldly proclaimed and Clearly explained. In Chapter 8 of Nehemiah there is a **Thirst** of God's Word, **Attention** to God's Word, **Reverence** for God's Word and

**Explanation** of God's Word. In Chapter 8 of Nehemiah we see a revival of God's people when the God's Word is boldly proclaimed and clearly explained.

Turn with me to Nehemiah 8 and I ask everyone to **stand** as we read the Word of God. (READ Neh. 8:1-8) The wall had been built, the people had come in to the city and now the Bible is established as the one true foundational substance. The Bible is the source for everything we are to teach and preach. Notice in verse one the **thirst** for God's Word.

The people have come together, unified with one voice calling "Bring out the Book! Read the Word's of God to us!" They have gathered on the plaza in front of the Water Gate, calling for God's Word. They desired the ultimate thirst quencher, they wanted to be satisfied by the water of the Word.

Have you ever been thirsty, I mean really, really thirsty. Erin and I were hiking one summer in the mountains just west of Lake Tahoe, California. It was a hot day and the sun was making the sweat stream down my back. I was thirsty. It was your typical hot and dusty trail. There was a reason why they called this area the Desolation wilderness. There just wasn't that much to see. There was water, but the signs all said "Do not drink" It was fortunate that my friend Steve had brought a water filter purifier, the pump kind. The instructions said it could make sewage water become crystal clear. I wasn't interested in testing that claim but, I was very thirsty. Yet, it took so long to filter out the water and you only got to drink just a few swallows that when I finally got a drink it tasted soooo good. I wanted to drink more and more. It's interesting how when you want a drink of water so bad and you can't just walk over to the faucet...you desire it even more.

The Bible compares the Words of God to water. Just like water, the Bible is life giving, it is needed for life and survival. The Word of God can be cleansing, refreshing and reviving to ones soul. The spiritual health of Jerusalem had been so desolate for so long that when the water of the Word was spilled out, the people thirsty for God's Word drank deeply. Of course if your not very thirsty, then a drink of water won't be very satisfying. What is it that can make us thirsty?

Revival starts with the people of God thirsty for the Word of God. It was that way with Josiah and Hezekiah. Recapturing the Bible was what spread the revival fires in the 16th century reformation. Four hundred years ago in Germany. God choose to light a fire under the lives of several men. As enlivened the Word to these few even greater lights began to burn all over Europe such as Melanchton, Calvin, Zwingli and Luther. The Bible was placed into the hands of the people. On came the Scottish Revivals enflamed by John Knox and the Wesley brothers of England. John was the preacher who delivered 50,000 sermons, traveled 250,000 miles mostly on horseback and spoke before crowds as large as 20,000 without the aid of a lapel mike. His brother Charles left the church with a great legacy of hymns such as "And can it be.." O For a Thousands Tongues" "Hark the Herald Angels sing and Jesus Lover of my Soul" Luther said I want to give them a Bible that they could understand and hymnal for them to sing. Let them loose and the flame will spread on its own. Revival starts with a few thirsty men and women who desire the Word of God. Where the Bible is boldly proclaimed and clearly explained.

There is not only a thirst for God's Word but also an attention to God's Word. Look at verse 3. The scrolls were read from early morning until the noontime...and the people were attentive to the book. Did you catch the focus? It was not on Ezra who was reading but it was on the Book. God's Words. They were more enamored with the Bible then the man. They realized that the foundation for belief the basis for actions in their lives came from the book. It begins with reading not with man's opinion. There is a focus on the book and an authority that lies in the book. Many of you may be thinking what I was, "five hours of Bible reading? How can they digest all that? How positively boring...I could never listen that long" A little while ago *The British Weekly* published this editorial letter.

Dear Sir: It seems ministers feel their sermons are very important and spend a great deal of time preparing them. I have been attending church quite regularly for thirty years, and I have probably heard 3,000 of them. To my consternation, I discovered I cannot remember a single sermon. I wonder if a minister's time might be more

profitably spent on something else? For weeks a storm of editorial responses ensued...finally ended by this letter:

Dear Sir: I have been married for thirty years. During that time I have eaten 32,850 meals-mostly my wife's cooking. Suddenly I have discovered I cannot remember the menu of a single meal. And yet...I have the distinct impression that without them, I would have starved to death long ago. Here in these first three verses is a **thirst** for God's Word and an **attention** to God's Word.

Notice in verses 4 and 5 a **reverence** for God's word. The people have been gathering since early morning. It's quite possible some stayed up all night just waiting for this time of reading. Almost like youth waiting for a concert to start. A special podium had been built to hold the readers. The acoustics and sound checks had been done. The people were seated all over the plaza, talking together in small groups. The warm up groups and preliminaries were over. In walks Ezra with the scrolls. As the Word of God rises to the podium, the people all stand in reverence. Notice the reverence for God's Word. The book was elevated above the people. The importance was on the book. No talking, no shuffling, no running out to the port a potty. They all stood to hear God's word. Not just a couple minutes. They stood a long time. As those of you who were in the military know. Standing is a way to show respect and honor. When the flag of our country is presented..we stand. When God's Word is read we are to stand. Not necessarily physically, but ask yourself and I standing in my heart? Am I showing reverence for God's Word.

They responded also with their voices. They shouted "Amen,Amen" Or truly, I agree. That's exactly right. They lifted up their voices in agreement and lifted up their hands in dependence. This was not an emotional high, it was not a show that says look at me worship. It was an unreserved response to God. The hands were stretched upward to God in dependence. It makes me think of my little son Noah in the crib and when you walk into the room he has his chubby little hands reaching up, crying to be held. A action that speaks of dependence. The people of Israel were on the plaza that day reaching up to God in dependence. They also bowed low to the ground in humility. These were symbols of what was occurring on the inside. It is also possible to

perform the outward physical signs without the inward attitude of dependence. Yes. Is it possible to affirm our dependence, and humility before God without the outward physical signs? The hand raising and humble bowing. Yes, most definitely. Whether you respond to God's word with or without physical outward signs, what is important is not necessarily what you are doing or not doing, but where is your heart...is it reverent before God. In agreement, dependence and humility before Him.

The Word of God has been boldly proclaimed now in verses 6-8 we see the word of God explained. This is the precursor for modern expository preaching. Working through a portion of scripture verse by verse explaining what is meant and how it applies to life. There are a group of teachers who now move into the audience and link up with groups of people to do a more in depth Bible study and to answer questions. The read from the book and explain what it means and how it applies. The Hebrew word for *translating* hrp (831 BDB) here means. To make something distinct, to separate it from something else so as to make it clear and understandable. Many of the people here were listening to the Scriptures with the cultural ears of Babylon. The lingua franca of the day was Aramaic not Hebrew. The Words needed to be explained so as to make it understandable and practical. This is what I try to do Sunday mornings. I want to make the Bible understandable and practical to God's people. It is my hope to whet a thirst for further study in God's word. It makes my day when someone stops me after the service and says you know I thought of another principle we could glean from that text. I want to encourage people to be thirsty for swim in the life giving words of God. With that in mind I have some study helps that might assist you in being in God's Word reading. I have some Campus journal for the youth and Daily Breads for the adults. I'm going to put these on the back table. Pick one up and begin daily spending time in the Word of God. The more you expose yourself to the Bible the thirstier you may become. This week when you reach for a juice in the refrigerator or a soda at work, think about grabbing the ultimate thirst quencher...the Very Words' of God

