

A Spirit of Power

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[0 : 00] All right, thank you so much, Lisa. Good morning, everybody. How y'all doing? You doing good? Right, we're awake, shaking off. You guys are here. You know, the soggy warriors coming in despite the weather.

Thank you for being here, those who are listening online. Glad you're here with us. We are continuing in our Nehemiah series. Go ahead. If you have a Bible, you can turn to Nehemiah chapter two.

If you don't have a Bible, don't worry. We got them up on the screens as well. And I want to begin today, Nehemiah, we're looking at Nehemiah to understand renewal. And I want to say this, God is doing renewal right now.

And, you know, to help us understand like what that means, renewal can be defined as the work God does to restore and do a work of restoration in his people and in his church.

And I want to say those two things are inseparable. And by that, it's like he's restoring them to their former glory. He's restoring us. He's bringing us into the fullness of our redemptive potential.

[1 : 01] And our redemptive potential is found in him. And so he is doing that, right? And he's doing that work whether we realize it and can recognize it or not. A lot of the work that he does is in secret.

And it's small and it's incremental. And every once in a while, we have these like big breakout moments where we see God do something amazing. But nevertheless, don't despise the days where it seems like God is doing nothing because nevertheless, renewal is happening, right? Renewal is happening even right now. And it is safe to say that we need the church, this work of renewal, this restoration. The church needs it because it isn't as it should be.

Even our church isn't as it should be. We haven't reached our full redemptive potential yet. And we can say the same for ourselves, for our own lives as we walk with Jesus. And we need that kind of renewal.

And it's only a renewal that God can do. You don't experience renewal on your own in your own power. You can't go and like get the latest like download from Dr. Phil or a TED Talk and implement that.

[2 : 03] And suddenly renewal starts happening in your life. It doesn't work that way. Here's the simple truth and kind of the big idea for today. There's no renewal without God's help and without God's favor over your life.

You and I do not have the power in and of ourselves to make renewal happen. Now, I want to say that and at the same time, I want to add to this. God still gives you and me responsibility in his work of renewal in our lives and his work of renewal in the church.

And we're going to see that in today's passage and how both of those things play out, both God's power and our responsibility. So, Nehemiah chapter 2, verse 1, it says this. In the month of Nisan, not the car, the actual month, in the 20th year of King Artaxerxes, when wine was before him, I took up the wine and gave it to the king.

Now, I had not been sad in his presence. And the king said to me, why is your face sad, seeing you are not sick? This is nothing but sadness of heart. Then I was very much afraid.

I said to the king, let the king live forever. Why should not my face be sad when the city, the place of my father's graves, lies in ruins and its gates have been destroyed by fire?

[3 : 15] Then the king said to me, what are you requesting? So, I prayed to the God of heaven.

And I said to the king, if it pleases the king and if your servant has found favor in your sight, that you send me to Judah, to the city of my father's graves, that I may rebuild it.

And the king said to me, the queen sitting beside him, how long will you be gone and when will you return? So, it pleased the king to send me when I had given him a time.

And I said to the king, if it pleases the king, let letters be given to me to the governors of the province beyond the river, that they may let me pass through until I come to Judah. And a letter to Asaph, the keeper of the king's forest, that he may give me timber to make beams for the gates of the fortress of the temple and for the wall of the city and for the house that I shall occupy.

And the king granted me what I asked for the good hand of my God was upon me. Then I came to the governors of the province beyond the river and gave them the king's letters.

Now, the king had sent me with officers of the army and horsemen, but when Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite servant heard this, it displeased them greatly that someone had come to seek the welfare of the people of Israel.

[4 : 29] This is God's word. And so, I'm going to begin by just quickly summarizing this part of the Nehemiah story. And to summarize that, I would say this, renewal is impossible without God's favor.

Renewal is impossible without God's favor. That is the big takeaway for you and me today. As you walk out the door and you're like, what did he talk about? That's not what I hope you're getting.

Renewal is impossible without his favor.

And yet, there is more to this. There is some amazing sequence and detail in this story that adds substance to that point. Now, first, I want to say it's worth recognizing what Nehemiah does here.

He knows he can't do the work of renewal. What's ahead of him, this rebuilding of Jerusalem's walls.

He knows he can't do it of his own strength and supply. Nehemiah, he's got the passion.

He's got the desire. He even shows us that he's got a pretty good plan. But you know what? He has no power to carry that out. You know, in one sense, that's got to be so frustrating, right? And another, very humbling.

[5 : 31] Well, guess what? Welcome to renewal in God's kingdom, friends. That's what that's like.

We are meant to live in that intersection where Nehemiah is at right there. Passion, desire, maybe even a really good plan, but yet we have no power, no ability to make it happen.

So what should we do? Well, we should start doing what Nehemiah did. Renewal is praying, preparing, and then waiting on God. Okay?

This isn't something you do just every so often. This is the definition of life for Jesus' disciples.

That's what we do when we follow him.

When you live dependent on the king's power, you live dependent on his timing as well. His timing to bring about renewal. And sometimes that just means we are in a waiting period.

But that waiting doesn't mean idleness and sitting by and doing nothing and sucking our thumbs until God does something. That's not what this story shows us. Look at this, like, seemingly unimportant piece of information that it opens up with in chapter 2, verse 1.

[6 : 38] In the month of Nisan, in the 20th year of King Artaxerxes, right? Why did he throw that little piece of information in? Well, it tells us that it's been four months since Nehemiah's heard about the news of Jerusalem and what's going on with God's people there.

That the walls are torn down, the gates are destroyed, and they're in trouble and shame. They're full of trouble and shame. That's four months. That's four months of Nehemiah holding that in and carrying that and praying and fasting and feeling that heaviness.

Now, that's a lot of downtime. Man, there could have been a ton of distractions for Nehemiah to enter into. He could have been binging Netflix or social media or getting, you know, sucked into the latest trends of the nation or video games or geopolitics.

Man, just insert your favorite distraction. We all can be sucked into any of those things. Now, let me say this. None of those things in and of themselves are bad. We can engage in them. It's just the problem is that when those things become such a priority, it pushes out the really important priority. What it really should be first and foremost in our lives. But Nehemiah, he's not wasting those four months. He's not just sitting by and just like, well, I wonder what's going to happen next.

[7 : 49] He's fasting. He's praying. And he is preparing. You see it in how he makes his request to the king when the king gives him a chance. It's obvious that he spent some time thinking about this and some effort thinking about this.

He is, what he's doing in the waiting, he is living toward renewal. He is living toward that moment. He's seeking God's favor. And he does it by taking on what responsibilities he can.

He's preparing himself. He isn't, you know, it's funny. He isn't like, man, I got this great plan. Now I'm going to rush out and just do it. Okay? God, be behind me. But he also doesn't slide into spiritual fatalism either.

He's not sitting back, hey, sara, sara, whatever will be, will be. He's praying and he's planning. He's praying, he's preparing. And that's a great pattern for our lives, right?

And that's why renewal is always a thing that we're in. Even right now, even when it seems God's not up to something, we can be doing the work of renewal in the waiting by doing that. Praying, planning, praying, preparing.

[8 : 53] Front end praying is so good for us. Renewal work doesn't just suddenly begin when God breaks out and we start to see the restoration happen. We start to see him moving and rebuilding our lives.

It's right now, friends. It starts beforehand with that prayer and that waiting and that preparation. Let me give you an example from my life of how this worked out. When I first felt called to ministry, I was in my early 20s.

I think I was 23. And so I went and I told my pastor, I was like, man, I feel like I might be called to full-time ministry. And he gave me some advice. He said, Jesse, I don't know and I can't tell you when that calling might be realized in your life.

But I want to tell you this. Start living toward it right now. If that's what God's called you towards, start living toward it right now. Start preparing yourself. Start putting tools in the tool chest for what you're going to need to be a pastor and a shepherd and caring for God's people.

Now, I want to say that was true for me. But you don't have to have a calling to be a pastor to do that. That we all have a God calling on our lives. When you say yes to Jesus, you are offered up ministry into him.

[10 : 00] You're called into ministry. It's called the priesthood of all believers. Every single one of us has a part and a role to play in his kingdom, in his church, to build it and to strengthen it. Now, for me, I had to say, okay, if what my pastor is saying is true and I trust him and I need to do that, I need to change my life.

I need to make some decisions. I need to make some adjustments. I need to make some adjustments.

I need to make some adjustments. I need to make some adjustments. Like, I had to come to choices for decisions like, should I commit to partnering with the church, to serve in it and give to it and sacrifice for it and lead in it and disciple people in it?

Should I be praying and reading my Bible? Should I consider ways to seek the welfare of the city that I live in? And you hear those things and it's like, Jesse, that's obviously like, I mean, yes, yes, and yes, right?

Well, of course. But I want to say when it comes to those kind of questions, you don't need a special word from the Lord, right? You don't need God to like ride on the wall and say you should be doing those things.

[11 : 21] You don't need to wait for a call to pastoral ministry to step into those things. All those things, all those choices, those are always a yes and amen for every disciple of Jesus. Those are things that we are called to do and called to get involved in, to be a part and be involved in the work of renewal that Jesus is on about in his church and through his church.

Renewal is praying and preparing for those opportunities and living toward those opportunities. And that's what Nehemiah has been doing. That's what he's been doing up to this point. And here's the thing, friends.

When you choose to live this way, when you live toward a life of renewal, when you see it as God is doing it right now, no matter what, even when I can't see it, what it does, it moves you into living a life of expectation.

Renewal lives with the expectation that God's favor is on you and his favor is on you in creating opportunities for you to step into. Nehemiah, he's sad, yes, but he isn't just sad.

He's prayed and he's planned and he's ready to be a part of God's restoration plan, which means he is on the lookout for that God opportunity and it comes. Okay, we see that.

[12 : 27] Verses one, it says, In the 20th year of King Artaxerxes, when wine was before him, I took up the wine and I gave it to the king. And now I had not been sad in his presence. And the king said to me, Why is your face sad, seeing you're not sick?

This is nothing but sadness of heart. Okay, what's going on here? Well, let me give you some little insight into Persian royal banquets, right? They were epic ragers.

I mean, they could go on for days. And they were part entertainment. They were part religious ceremony. And they were part leadership summit. But always, they had this special time set aside for drinking wine and getting drunk.

Persians, they loved their wine. Let me tell you. In fact, there was a purpose. They had a reason that they would do this. They would get drunk before the deliberations for the leadership summit part of their gathering.

Because they believed that is when they were most truthful. So this is the time of the banquet when the wine is before the king. This is decision-making time.

[13:30] This is honesty time. And the king gets honest with Nehemiah, right? Because Nehemiah is breaking the cardinal rule, the big no-no. You're not supposed to be sad in the king's presence, especially when there's a royal banquet going on.

That is like, uh-uh-uh. And he calls it out. He says, Nehemiah, what is going on with you, man? You ain't sick. What is the sadness of heart? A.K.A. Debbie Downer, you're ruining my party. Can you stop it, please?

Now, here's the thing. Nehemiah is in that situation. If he's not prayed up, and if he's not looking for an opportunity, that God opportunity, he would be terrified. Like, I'm about to be killed kind of terrified.

But Nehemiah, he's not. He's ready. He's ready for this. He sees it. The king is inviting him to speak at a time when empire-level decisions can be made. That's a great opportunity.

Here's the thing, friends. Living with expectations, it opens you up to all kinds of God opportunities. You know, last week, someone, after the service, they came up for prayer.

[14:29] And here's the thing. In their life, they were in a stressful, trying situation. That was tough for them. They had been applying for a job for months and just hadn't been getting any success.

And so finances were getting, like, beyond tight. They were, like, freaked out and crying. And so we prayed together. And then in my prayer, I felt this sudden boldness to ask God to specifically provide a job in the next day or two.

And I want to say this. I never do that on principle because I don't believe in Nehemiah and claim it. Like, God is sovereign. Just because I say it and I say it really loud and strong doesn't mean I twist his arm. He's like, okay, okay, okay, uncle, I'll do it.

That's not how it works. God is sovereign. But in that moment, let me tell you, I felt God sovereignly urging me to ask him in that manner. And so I did. And guess what?

The next day, they sent me a text and they said, you're not going to believe this. I was called into an interview and I was given a job. I don't get the credit. God gets the credit for it.

[15:28] He did all the work. He moved me to pray in that way. I don't know why, but he gets all the credit for making that happen. And you know what? I didn't have to force my way into sensing God's favor. I didn't have to gin it up through like some incantation and, you know, like let me repeat some statements over and over and over again until I start to feel the favor and the faith.

It just happened. I sensed it and I seized on it and I prayed to God because I felt like he was leading me in that manner. And you know what? He's sovereign and we can rest on the fact that he is sovereign.

Not us. And that truth should embolden us to step through what looks like doors that God is opening. But I want to say this. As you do that, as you step through that open door, that opportunity, don't leave God behind.

I love what happens here in verse 4. The king says to Nehemiah, what are you requesting? He just sets the table for Nehemiah.

Like Nehemiah now has the golden opportunity to ask, what does Nehemiah do? He doesn't run into giving his sales pitch. What does he do? So I prayed to the God of heaven.

[16:35] The king had to open the door. Nehemiah is stepping through it and he stops and he prays. He doesn't leave God behind. And that's the thing that we have to realize.

Renewal for you and me is unceasing dependence on God's favor. Now I want to say this. I wish I lived that way. So often I don't. Have you noticed the greater the crisis in your life, the greater your prayer life is?

But then what happens? God answers the prayer. We get it resolved. We kind of forget, don't we? We walk through that door, we leave God back there.

You know, God's been convicting me so much about this, specifically around preaching. And I just want to say this. When I first started preaching, I was terrible. I mean, I am not a naturally gifted public speaker.

Like when I was young and had to speak in public, I would black out. My mind would go empty. I would forget everything I was going to say. It was terrible. Nobody had a good time when I got up to speak, right?

[17 : 42] Including me. But yet God calls me to be a pastor. God gives me this teaching gift, right? And I'm like, what am I supposed to do this? And so, man, stepping into this, this used to be the scariest place for me.

And beforehand, I would go to God in prayer and ask for his help and his anointing and his power. And it's like, Lord, I am going to step into something. And I hope I can be a blessing to your people. But you know what? I can't do it. I need your help. And here's the thing. The longer you preach, the better you get at the delivery, right? And it's easy for me to start relying on my delivery ability rather than God's power.

It really is. Here's the problem. A good delivery can impress and wow people's heads, but it doesn't change their hearts. It doesn't woo their hearts to God at all.

And it's easy for me to slide into trusting in my own strength more than I like to admit. It happens all the time, guys. It really does. And I have to get back and I have to return. And I have to like, I got to do this work of renewal like all the time.

[18 : 43] Oh, Lord, I have to remember I need your help. I need your power because without you, I am just a dude. Here's the thing. Where are you trusting in yourself more than God?

What are the circumstances that you're facing? What are things in your life that you are trusting? You've become to trust in yourself more than God. I love what Nehemiah does there in verse 4. He stops and he prays because he never stops needing God's help. And so he never stops seeking God's help. He knows where his bread is really buttered. And I bet you as a young Jewish man, well, I wouldn't say he's a young Jewish man.

We don't know how old he is, but he's a Jewish man. And so he probably knows this proverb, Proverb 21.1. It says, the king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the Lord. He turns it wherever he will.

Nehemiah, he isn't hoping in himself. He isn't hoping in that he's got the right powers of persuasion to make this thing happen. He isn't hoping in Artaxerxes is drunk enough to give him what he wants.

[19 : 47] Nehemiah's hope is in God alone. I want to say this. A good measure of our dependence on God is our prayer life. You can say the same about the church. Our dependence on God, it's a good measure of it.

It's in our prayer life as a church. Too often what we do is we put so much time and energy into programs and projects and very little into prayer. And what if that were flipped?

What if that were flipped? Both in our personal lives and as a church as well. You know what? We'd resemble the church in Acts a lot more, especially in practice at least. That early church, they lived bold lives.

Like Nehemiah does here. I mean, look at the boldness of Nehemiah's request to the king. Verse 5. If it pleases the king, and if your servant has found favor in your sight, that you send me to Judah, 800 miles away.

Right? There ain't no bullet trains. There is no planes to get you there fast. I mean, that's a haul. Send me there, the city of my father's graves, that I may rebuild it.

[20 : 51] Then he goes on to say in verse 7. If it pleases the king, let letters be given to me, to the governors of the province beyond the river, that they may let me pass through until I come to Judah.

And a letter to Asaph, the keeper of the king's forest, that he may give me timber to make beams for the gates of the fortress of the temple, and for the wall of the city, and for the house that I shall occupy.

I mean, can we just stop and appreciate the audacity of Nehemiah's request here? Okay? He's going to the king like the strongest person in that region right now.

And he says to him, you know what? I need you to hold my job while I go on an extended leave of absence to rebuild a city that I care a lot more about than the one I'm living in and that you're

leading.

Oh, and I'm going to rebuild it. And by the way, I need you to pay for the whole thing. That'd be great. Can you just do that? That's the request Nehemiah's making today. That's some bold right there.

[22 : 01] And that kind of boldness doesn't come out of nowhere. It's cultivated through continual prayer and dependence on God. Because in prayer, before God's hand even moves towards us, what often happens is he moves our heart toward his.

And that nearness to God's heart is what produces that boldness. Because we become more and more convinced of who he is. We find out as we get closer to his heart, we begin to understand him more and more.

He is a good father. He is a gracious king toward his church. He cares about his people. And those things inform our requests. We begin to ask for the things that God wants to supply.

We begin to ask for the things that are tailor-made and jive with renewal. Did Nehemiah get everything he asked for? Well, let's look at the second half of verse 8. And the king granted me what I asked for.

For the good hand of God was upon me. He gets everything he needs. And then the king goes beyond that. He gives them even more because Nehemiah is sent out and he goes.

[23 : 04] And look what. He comes to the governors of the province beyond the river. And he gives them the king's letters. Just like he asked for. But then what does the king do? He goes even beyond Nehemiah's requests. He sends him with officers of the army and horsemen.

Nehemiah arrives in Judea with everything he needs. Fully equipped with provision. And fully equipped with protection. But he also does this thing.

He goes. The king says, I'll give you everything you need. And it's not like Nehemiah isn't suddenly the dog that caught the car. And all of a sudden he's like, oh, shoot. Now what am I going to do?

This is a lot bigger. And this is a lot crazier. And this is a lot scarier than I realized. No, he goes. He is sent. Because that is what renewal is all about at its heart.

Renewal is seeking the king's supply. And it's seeking the king's strength. But it's for the benefit of God's people. Now let me say this. In this whole story that we've seen.

[24 : 02] In this whole episode of Nehemiah face to face with the king in that place. What is he acting like? He is playing advocate for God's people. God's people in Judea didn't even know that was happening.

And he is there playing advocate. He isn't focused on himself. He isn't thinking about how much he's going to have to give up leaving the king's palace. Woe is me.

He's laser focused on renewal for God's people and for God's kingdom. And everything he does in this story is thinking about them. And why does he do that?

His heart has been changed. The center of God's heart is the church. His people. His kingdom. That's what he loves the most. That is what he is on about.

And I'm talking about the church. I'm talking about those that are already brought in. And I'm also talking about those that are yet to be brought into it. That's at the center of God's heart.

[25 : 01] And when you and I, when we live toward renewal. What's going to happen is that is going to captivate our heart too. The church is going to captivate our heart. As we go everywhere and we see people. We're going to be wondering man.

Lord are these the people that you are going to bring into your church one day? That's how we live. We don't live for a brand of church. We don't live for a building to go to. I'm talking about God's people and that heart captivation.

What that turns us into. It turns us into the kind of person that Nehemiah is. It turns us into advocates. Who live seeking God's favor for the sake of his people. For the sake of his kingdom. We live looking for opportunities to bring the king's favor to bear. Nehemiah, he goes with the king's commendation letters, right? And those commendation letters, that was like they gave him access to the king's supply.

Nehemiah had that. He also had the king's warrior escort to protect him along the way. To make sure that he was going to get to where he needs to go, right? And he needs that because God's people have some real enemies.

[26 : 04] Verse 10 names two of them. Two very influential men of that region. And we're going to learn more about them in the weeks to come. And they were not happy that somebody was coming

to seek the welfare of God's people.

When we go about doing living renewal and caring about the people of God and living toward that, there are principalities and powers that are not happy that we are seeking the welfare of God's people.

And so we need God's supply. We need his strength. Because the work is not going to be easy. Now, we need to consider, how do we get that kind of supply?

How do we get that strength to do the work of renewal today? And I want to say this, there isn't some kind of magical incantation to make that happen. There isn't some kind of special dance to call down the favor of God.

And his strength and supply does not work that way. I've been talking about Nehemiah being an advocate for God's people.

[27 : 08] Do you know that the church has two advocates? Not little A advocates, big A advocates. The apostle John names both of them. He calls Jesus our advocate in 1 John 2 verse 1.

And then he calls the Holy Spirit our advocate in John 16, 7. It wasn't John who said that, it was Jesus who said that. He calls the Holy Spirit our advocate, our helper.

That word there in the Greek is the same word used for both of them, paraclete. See, Jesus is the greater Nehemiah. Think about this. Jesus left heaven.

He left the palace to live among God's people. He went there to a broken, busted down group of people who were hopeless and helpless. And he came to bring renewal and restoration.

And now he is sitting on the throne in heaven, advocating for us, interceding for us, we're told. And we have his letters of recommendation, his seal upon us. And what is that seal?

[28 : 08] It's our other advocate, the Holy Spirit. And there can be no renewal without them. The Holy Spirit is God's powerful renewal in his church today. It's God's powerful renewal in our lives today.

Now, I am not implying that the Holy Spirit is some impersonal power. He is a person. But he is a person with power. All the power of heaven. Did you know that Nehemiah's name means God comforts?

Jesus described the Holy Spirit as the comforter. Nehemiah was in charge of the king's wine. In the prophetic literature that anticipated the messianic reign of Jesus, wine was an indicator of God's presence.

Nehemiah was sent by the king to God's people to be with them. Jesus, our king, promised to send the Holy Spirit after his ascension into heaven, after his kingly coronation when he entered into the heavenly places.

He's now seated on the throne as king over all kings. And you know what he did? He sent the Holy Spirit to his church. We see that at Pentecost. And we live in that age. We are in that age.

[29 : 16] We are the people of God and the people of the Spirit. Nehemiah comes with the king's authority and full access to the king's provisions. The Holy Spirit does the same.

Nehemiah brought everything the people will need to do this work of renewal that is ahead of them. He's going to lead them. He's going to guide them. He's going to strengthen them. He's going to reform them. He's going to unite them.

In short, Nehemiah is Israel's advocate come near. The one who came to walk alongside them, to lead them in the way of renewal. The church has this same thing today.

The advocate, the helper, the one who walks alongside us, the comforter. He's the Holy Spirit that our king has given to his people, his church. And that means we have everything we need to do this. He has the power to do this, friends.

And here's the thing. There isn't any other way to be a disciple of Jesus. There isn't a version of Christianity that is like absent of the Spirit, that has lived apart from the power of the Spirit, that cuts him out of this.

[30 : 17] Theologian Gordon Fee puts it this way. I think it is fair to note that if there is one thing that differentiates the early church from its 20th century counterpart, obviously this was written a while ago.

We could say the 21st century counterpart as well. It is in the level of awareness and experience of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. Ask any number of people today from all the sectors of Christendom to define or describe Christian conversion or the Christian life.

And the most noticeable feature of that definition would be its general lack of emphasis on the active, dynamic role of the Holy Spirit. But it's precisely the opposite in the New Testament, he goes on to say.

The Spirit is no mere addendum. Indeed, he is the essential ingredient of Christian life, experienced as a powerful presence in their lives. Whatever else may be said of the early church, it was first and foremost comprised of people of the Spirit.

We are people of the Spirit. If you are a follower of Jesus, you are a part of this. The church is people of the Spirit. And he is the Spirit of renewal, which means this. Renewal is not a version of the Christian life.

[31 : 35] It is the only way of life that Jesus has opened for us. By his death and by his resurrection. And it is the only way of life that the Holy Spirit leads us into.

So as the band comes up and we respond. I want to say to you today, if you're here or if you're listening online, if you are not yet a follower of Jesus, I want to say to you that God's favor is here. He could be calling you to come to him today to put your faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior. And maybe you're here today and you're here because you've tried everything else and your life's in shambles, your life's a wreck.

Maybe you're here because you have this innate feeling of just ongoing guilt and that you're not enough and something isn't right. And that is the work of God in you.

That is the Holy Spirit convicting you of sin and showing you that you aren't enough on your own. You need something that you don't have. You need Jesus Christ. And he already came and he already died a death that you couldn't die.

[32 : 36] He atoned for all your sins. He atoned for that so that the penalty of sin, it was paid for by him. And by faith in him, that penalty is paid for and the power of sin can be broken in your life.

And that beginning of the work of renewal and restoration, that potential, that redemptive potential that you don't even yet know about. But somewhere in your heart has this sense of, hey, I know I'm not what I should be.

And that starts by entering into this relationship with Jesus Christ and trust and faith and following him. As the Holy Spirit comes and leads you in this way, come and join us. We are the people of God.

We're saying, come and join us in that. Please. We're going to have a prayer for you to pray up on the screen. Now, I want to say to those of us in the room, those of us who are hearing this, you are already a follower of Jesus.

How is God calling to you, calling us to respond today? How is he calling us to respond to this today? This is an invitation. I hope this is a welcome wake-up call. I hope this is like stirring something in our hearts where we're just like, ooh, yeah, this is like, I've been missing this.

[33 : 45] This is what I want to be a part of in God's kingdom. What's your next step? What changes can you make today? How can you start living renewal? How can you start living towards this today?

God is calling us to this. And in a moment, we're going to take communion. We're going to give ourselves the time to examine our hearts and do business with God. And that's good renewal work. And then we're going to go and we're going to take communion.

And that is a renewal meal. We get to take, we get to do all of this in the king's presence. We get to take hold of his communion. And that's the king's supply for us and his strength for us.

And we're going to do that. And so what I want to do is I just want to give us a moment on the front end just to do business with God. And then when you're ready, go to the table, get the elements, come back and take communion whenever you're ready.

But before I do this, I just want to lead us into this time of examination, the time we can spend with God right now. I'm just going to lead us in with a time of prayer. Pray with me. King Jesus, I ask you to come and I ask you to bless this time right now.

[34 : 50] Bless this time of examination. Bless this time of communion. Holy Spirit, work renewal in our hearts. Jesus, on the night you were betrayed, you gave this bread to your disciples and you broke it and you said, take and eat.

This is my body broken for you. And likewise, you took the cup and you gave it to them saying, this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many.

Friends, as you drink that, remember this is his blood shed for you. Continue to just sit in God's presence.

Open yourselves up to what he is wanting to do and say in you. Be aware of what the Spirit is doing in you and around you. You do business with God and when you're ready, come and take communion. Amen.