

The Beginning of Revival

by David Ravenhill

David Ravenhill emphasizes the importance of prioritizing spiritual restoration as the foundation for revival, using Hezekiah's reign as a model for today's believers.

Duration: 58:59

Scripture: 2 Chronicles 29:1

Topics: "Revival", "Restoration of Relationship with God"

Description

David Ravenhill emphasizes the importance of prioritizing a relationship with God, drawing from the story of King Hezekiah, who initiated a revival by restoring the house of God after years of neglect. Hezekiah's commitment to opening the doors of the temple and cleansing it symbolizes the need for personal and communal repentance, as well as the restoration of spiritual practices like prayer and worship. Ravenhill calls for individuals to confront their hidden sins and make God their first priority, leading to a transformative revival in their lives and communities. The sermon highlights that true revival begins when we acknowledge our unfaithfulness and seek to restore our relationship with God.

Transcript

Brother Leonard Ravenhill meant much to this church. He was one of the men that directed course, and I'm so thankful for Leonard Ravenhill, but I'm thankful tonight that his son is carrying on in the same footsteps. Brother David, we're so glad to have you with us.

My pleasure. Well, it is a blessing to be back with you in Oylton. You have almost killed us with kindness.

We had such a wonderful meal. If I'd have eaten everything, I would have exploded. And thank all of you who made that possible.

And I, again, just appreciate that time of wonderful worship. Always good to be in the church. It is bringing people into the presence of God, isn't it? Seen a lot of changes, some new faces, some old faces.

I noticed Gary is putting a gray rinse in his hair these days. He wasn't doing that last time I was here, but we're all aging. If you have your Bible tonight, turn with me to 2 Chronicles.

And I want to share a portion of Scripture that I believe is something that the Lord laid on my heart. 2 Chronicles chapter 29. This is the story of Hezekiah, at least part of his life.

And it is the beginning of one of the great revivals of the Old Testament. Hezekiah grew up in a home that was far from God, even though his father was the king of Israel. His father was one of the most wicked of all kings.

You can read about his father's life in the previous chapter, chapter 28. It says all the things that he did. How he burned incense in the Valley of Ben-Hidden.

Burned his sons in the fire. He sacrificed and burned incense on the high places and so on. I mean, he turned the nation of Israel away from God.

And one of his final acts was to go into the house of God and close down the house of God. Boarded up. There wasn't a single Israelite that had access into the presence of God.

The priesthood would disband it. Everything sort of ground to a halt. And he single-handedly turned the nation of Israel into a nation that was filled with immorality.

Filled with idolatry and every other sort of form of wickedness. And Hezekiah then becomes king. Let's pick up the story then in chapter 29 and verse 1. Hezekiah became king when he was 25 years of age.

He reigned for 29 years in Jerusalem. Verse 2, he did what was right in the sight of the Lord. That's always a good sign.

That's the one thing that is said several times about Hezekiah. He did what was right in the sight of the Lord. Not in the sight of his church.

That may be good. That may be bad. Not in the sight of the elders.

Not in the sight of the deacon board. Not in the sight of, you know, the pastor. But in the sight of the Lord.

You see, one day we will stand before the Lord. We won't stand holding the hand of the pastor or one of the deacons or your husband or wife. We will stand before the Lord and we will give an account to the Lord.

And this man obviously understood that. And so he sought to govern his life in the light of God's presence. Verse 3, in the first year of his reign, in the first month, he opened the doors of the house of the Lord and he repaired them.

Now I want to combine verse 3 with verse 17. It says they began the consecration on the first day of the first month. So let me combine those two verses and put it this way, verse 3 again.

In the first year of his reign, in the first month, on the first day, he opened the doors of the house of the Lord and he repaired them. That's what I call priority. Before he does anything else, the very first day of his reign, the very first month, the very first year, he decides we need to get right with God.

There is something wrong, something drastically wrong. The house of God is not in the condition that the house of God should be. The house of God is not where God intended it to be.

And I intend to change the house of God. That's the beginning of revival. When your number one priority becomes getting right with God, putting the house of God right.

And I'm not talking about the corporate house of God necessarily. I'm talking about this house of God. The Bible says whose house we are.

And when that becomes a priority that supersedes every other priority in our life. The very first day that you're able to do something about it, the very first month, the very first year of his reign. You know, most people when they gain a position, political position, this was not only political but spiritual obviously.

But most politicians, you know, in the wee hours of the morning when everybody else is sleeping, you know, they vote a pay increase for themselves. And all sorts of other legislature is passed and so on. He doesn't do any of that.

His one priority again is spiritual, getting right with God. We need men and women that will get right with God. And make it again the number one priority of their lives.

Now notice in verse 2 it says, He did what was right in the sight of the Lord according to all that his father David had done. It's good to have some role models. This man could not look to his natural father as a role model.

His father again was an idolater, his father was involved in all sorts of abominations. And so he looks for a man, he finds a man in the life of David. And he says, Lord I want to live my life the way David lived his life.

We need some more Davids in the house of God. I'm speaking about spiritual giants that the young people can look to and say, I want to be a man of God like that man of God. I want to be a woman of God like that woman of God over there.

I've watched her, I've observed her life not just for a month or two months but year in and year out. The consistency in her life, her devotion to God and so on. That's the sort of life I want to live.

And that was the type of man that Hezekiah was. He found a role model, David. And he said, God I want to be a man like David.

The Bible says about David he was a man after God's own heart. He pursued the heart of God. Thank God for godly examples.

And so here he is now. And he is intent again on restoring the house of God back to the purpose of God. So verse 3 again.

In the first year of his reign, in the first month he opened the doors of the house of the Lord and he repaired them. Doors are for two things. To permit access and to prevent access.

When you go home tonight you will open up your front door and it will permit you access to your house. After you go through that door and get your wife through and the kids through, whatever the case may be. You will turn around and close that door, no doubt, you know, turn the deadbolt and so on to prevent access.

Doors need to be opened but they need to be repaired. He didn't just leave the doors open. It's dangerous to leave your doors open all the time.

Goodness knows what is going to enter in if you leave the doors open. You know if you live up in Colorado somewhere you might have a, you know, wake up in the middle of the night to have a great big bear there

at the foot of your bed these days. Or a mountain lion or something else.

You live in Chicago, you leave your doors open, you know, you'll have one of your neighbors that may not have the best reputation breaking into the house. You know, we need to be careful. But he opens doors and he repaired them.

You see there are times when doors need to open, there are times when doors need to be closed. The Bible says lift up your heads or your gates and be you lifted up your everlasting doors that the King of Glory may come in. There's a time when we open the doors.

The Bible says behold I stand at the door and knock if any man open the door. There are times we need to open the doors. There are times we need to close the doors.

The Psalmist says, you know, I will set no worthless thing before my eyes. You see this temple has got various doors. These are doors, these are doors, this is a door and so on.

There are times when this door needs to be closed. I've set a seal over the, you know, the door of my lips, the Bible says. But there are other times when, you know, the eye gate needs to be closed at certain times.

There are other times when it needs to be opened. The Psalmist said open mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law. And so this temple, if you like, needs the doors repaired.

There are things we should be looking at that we don't look at. There are things we shouldn't be looking at that we do look at. Isn't that right? We need to ask God to open our eyes that we may understand the Word of God.

We need to ask God to close our eyes not to be involved in other things. Job says, I've made a covenant with God not to gaze upon a virgin. Here was this man, the book of Job starts out so, you know, with this wonderful picture of this man of God.

A man who was faithful to God, a man of integrity, a man who was upright, feared God, turned away from evil and so on and so forth. But he wasn't born that way. That was the outworking of the grace of God in his life.

And as we get into the book of Job, at least in a few places, he gives us a little key. He says, you know, there was a time I would come into the house of God and I'd be looking at all the young ladies. But one day I came under conviction, I'm embellishing this a little bit because obviously that's true.

But he says, I made a covenant with mine eyes not to gaze on the virgins. You see, the Spirit of God convicted him. That door needs to close.

You can't open that door all the time, you're going to get into trouble. And so here he is now opening the doors and repairing the doors. That's amazing, isn't it, how many people live behind closed doors.

You know, you can talk to individuals about certain things and you can talk to them for hours. You know, you push their buttons. You know, talk to them about fishing and they'll rattle off about, you know, all the latest equipment and the latest lure to use and so on and so forth.

And, you know, talk to somebody else about motorcycles and they'll tell you how to make a model and so on and so forth. But then when you talk to them about spiritual things, all of a sudden the door's closed. Head sort of drops a little bit and you say, well brother, what's God doing in your life these days? Well, you know, a few sort of mumbling words like, well, I don't know, things, I don't know, you know, okay.

I mean, you realize, listen, something is going on. The door is closed and the door has to be opened. Why? Because he is about to do something.

It says in verse 5, he's going to carry the uncleanness out from the holy place. One of the things the enemy hates is the opening of closed doors. He will tell you, whatever you do, don't open that door.

The opening of the door of your life, again, is that place of transparency, that place of honesty, to say, listen, what is going on inside needs to come out. The only way it's going to come out is when I become transparent and honest, and I open the door and I allow the light to come in. There is darkness inside.

There are things that are going on in my life I've never shared with anybody. My spouse doesn't know about it, you know, my kids don't know about it, or my mother or father don't know about it. I'm battling with this, I'm battling with that, and it's been something that I've been battling with for years, but I've never had the gut, so to speak, to open the door and confess my fault to a brother or sister and be prayed and get healing.

I'm embarrassed to think that I've been in the house of God for five years or ten years, and I've covered this thing, and I've suppressed this thing, and I'm living behind closed doors. And I know I'm not in the place that God wants me to be. And so here he is now, he is about to open the doors.

It's amazing, isn't it, what goes on, as I said, behind closed doors. I could tell you, I'm sure your pastor could too, horror stories. As I pastored over the years, and people have made their way into my office to inform me of the most horrendous types of sin.

You know, I am not surprised anymore about the things that I've had confessed to me. Every single sexual sin, every conceivable sort of sin. And I've also, you know, been amazed, and yet cease to be amazed in one sense, at the people confessing them.

People that I've seen in the house of God, people that I've seen counseling at the prayer meetings, you know, giving words and so on, and five or six years later, all of a sudden something comes out, and I think, my goodness, I can't believe they sat there Sunday after Sunday after Sunday, battling with that particular issue in their life. And we've got to come to that place, this is where revival begins. Again, this is the beginning of a revival.

The house of God is not in the condition that it should be. You'll notice as we go through, not every verse of this chapter, but as we go through some of the verses, that there is nothing done to the outside of the house. It is all internal.

The problem is not external, the problem is internal with the house of God. That is also true today. We can dress up, we can have all the right expressions, bless you, good to see you brother, amen, you know, hallelujah, we've got all our religious sort of jargon, and we can sort of fake it pretty good, can't we? And we can sit there and, you know, just pull the wool over somebody's eyes, because we know the talk, if you like.

But then, there comes that moment of being honest, and saying, God, I can't stand the condition of this house any longer. And God hates hypocrisy. It's one thing that God hates, is that play acting, trying to put on a facade.

I'm more spiritual than, you know, I really am. I remember a young girl that we had on our team in New Guinea many years ago, back in the seventies, early seventies. She'd been with us for a number of months, and I noticed that she'd begun to withdraw a little bit from the activities of the team.

We had a base with about 15 young people that worked with us there, on that base in Port Moresby, New Guinea. And so my co-worker and myself, we called her in one day, I'll call her name Susan, that's not her real name, and we sat down with Susan, and we said to Susan, Susan, you know, we just were concerned, you don't seem to be entering in the way you did when you first arrived, and so on, and you know, as we began to probe a little bit lovingly, you know, we ran into a closed door. No, everything's fine, no, you don't understand, no, nothing's going on, no, I'm okay, and you know, so on and so forth.

And then all of a sudden, my co-worker had a word from God. And he looked at her, and he said, Susan, he said, God has just told me something about you. That you have been involved in an incestuous relationship with your father.

And all of a sudden, that door opened, and she sobbed like I've never seen a young lady sob. It turned out that her father was a deacon or an elder, I can't remember which now, in a church, I won't mention which country. And this had gone on repeatedly, as a little child, it sexually abused her, year in and year out, for many, many years.

She was terrified to tell her mother, in case, you know, her mother didn't believe her, and somehow it would backlash on her, she was terrified to go to the pastor, so she knew if she went to the pastor, that her father would be, you know, thrown out of his position, if you like, and so on. And then she didn't know if it would break up the family home, and so instead of, you know, trying to get some help, she bottled all this thing up inside her. After all, she was just a young girl at the time.

And she learned to live with all the pain of that situation. But you see, God was running that house clean. And the Spirit of God, it doesn't always happen that way, but the Spirit of God had to open those doors.

And it was amazing what came out. And I could tell you all sorts of stories like that, but you see, God is asking us to be honest. Confess your faults.

Acknowledge your condition. God is wanting to take the uncleanness out. The uncleanness will not come out, or can't come out, until the doors are open.

And the enemy will lie to you and say, listen, you've been forward so many times, you know, why go forward again? Don't confess that thing anymore, or maybe you've never confessed it. I find a lot of times when people come to the altar, you know, I say, brother, can I pray with you? And they say, yeah, I've got a problem. You know, well, I tell them, I say, listen, Jesus didn't die for problems.

He died for sinners. And unless you name it as a sin, I can't help you and God can't help you. And it's amazing, isn't it? We don't want to say, listen, I've got sin in my life.

No, I've got a hang-up, I've got a problem, I'm battling with something. It's when we begin to confess our sin, the Bible says the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses from all sin. Not from problems, not

from hang-ups.

You know, we don't want to face the reality of that thing. We don't want to make it as bad as it really is. We want to sort of grasp it over a little bit and say, well, you know, I'm just struggling with something, would you pray for me? And I normally go a little, well, could you be a little more specific than that? Well, they don't want to get specific.

And you know, unless we get specific, then the blood doesn't know what to cleanse, so to speak. And so here we have this situation. He gathers together the Levites in verse 5, and he says, listen to me, oh Levites, consecrate yourself now, consecrate the house of the Lord, the God of your fathers, carry the uncleanness out from the holy place.

And then we have the background as to how all of this transpired. He goes now into the past. In verse 6, for our fathers have been unfaithful.

Our fathers have been unfaithful. That's where it all begins. This downward spiral begins with unfaithfulness.

Notice it says, they have been unfaithful, done evil in the sight of the Lord, and have forsaken Him. In other words, they had lost out on their relationship with God. Unfaithfulness, of course, is what happens when a spouse runs off with some other man or woman, and we talk about, you know, he was unfaithful to his wife.

She was unfaithful to the marriage. And more than any other type of relationship, our relationship with Christ is likened to that of a marriage. And there is nothing more devastating than when somebody is unfaithful to that covenant relationship.

My wife and I made some good friends, or made friends with some people when we were down in Pensacola. And they had been in the ministry, and there had been a period where there had been unfaithfulness on one of their parts. And I was out one day having lunch with this particular man.

My wife had got to know his wife, and he wanted to make sure that I knew a little bit about the background and this area of unfaithfulness. And even as he told me about it, the tears were in his eyes. Now this was years prior to that.

But he was still, if you like, battling with the fact that his wife had been unfaithful. Even though this thing was under the blood, even though that thing had been dealt with, their marriage was stronger than it had ever been, they were both back in full-time sort of ministry, and so on. Nevertheless, the pain of that unfaithfulness.

You know, God feels that way. Unfaithfulness is when you find satisfaction in something else other than God. When your first love is replaced by some other love.

Isn't that right? When you get your kicks, if you like. When you get the satisfaction from some other relationship. That's why the Bible says, Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world.

If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. In other words, when we have a greater affinity, a greater love for the world, than we do for God Himself. That's unfaithfulness.

And this is where it begins. It begins with this personal relationship beginning to unravel, if you like. Our fathers were unfaithful.

They'd done evil in the sight of the Lord. That's what separates us. And they have forsaken Him.

It is the forsaking of Him that takes us on this downward spiral. When He no longer is our first love. When He is no longer the passion of our life.

And then He says this, And they have turned their faces away from the dwelling place of the Lord. You know, once you lose out on your relationship with God, then you have no desire really for the house of God. The reason people don't go to the house of God is not just because they've lost interest in the house of God, it's because they've lost interest in Him.

Isn't that right? Put it this way, let's say you're dating a girl, let's imagine you're not married and you're dating a girl, and you know, you're dropping by the house every, you know, every other night. And that goes on for many, many months and the, you know, the mother maybe of this particular girl says, you know, I haven't seen Tom for a little while. You know, he used to be around here almost every night.

You know, but about a week seems to have gone by, a couple of weeks. You know, Susan, what's going on? I mean, she said, Oh, John and I are no longer going together. You know, he's found somebody else.

You see, it begins with a breakdown in the relationship and then he's no longer going to where Susan lives. And that's true spiritually, isn't it? When we lose out on our relationship with God, we no longer want to be where God lives, so to speak. We don't be, we don't want to hang around the family.

We don't want to come to the house of God. It's always a sign that something is wrong spiritually when people are not attending the house of God on a regular basis. The next thing it says in verse 7, they've also shut the doors of the porch and they put out the lamps.

Now obviously we need to understand this in the Old Testament setting here. This is the temple or the tabernacle and the lamp has gone out. The lamp, of course, is the candlestick, not technically a candlestick, a lampstand.

It wasn't really a light produced with candles. It was produced by oil. It was an oil lamp, a seven-branch candlestick.

But the lamp has gone out. The lamp, of course, speaks and testifies of the Spirit of God. In other words, there's no longer any spiritual activity in your life.

You're no longer hearing the voice of God. The Spirit of God is no longer what He used to be. You're walking in darkness.

There's no illumination. There's no revelation. There's no insight.

You're in a time when you're just sort of wandering around. You're wondering, God, what's going on? It's like walking into a dark room and you can't find the light switch. And there was a time when there was insight and understanding and revelation and you enjoyed the things of God, but the lamps have gone out.

Not only that, it says, they have not burned incense. The incense, of course, speaks of two things. It speaks of prayer and it speaks of our praise.

Primarily prayer, but also praise. You see, when we lose out on our relationship with God, we no longer want to be involved in the house of God. We no longer want to get involved in the Word of God.

We no longer want to get involved in prayer. We no longer want to stop praising God and magnifying the Lord. All of these things really can be traced back to the lack of a relationship with God because when you're in relationship, then these things are automatic or should be.

These things are indicative that something is wrong. There's no prayer going on. The incense is not being offered.

There's no time of praise. And I'm not talking about, you know, just when you come on a Sunday morning there are always those that come maybe on a Sunday morning and you never see them the rest of the week and they may enter in and sing louder than anybody else. But if they don't sing when they're by themselves, something is wrong.

God looks at that. I'm convinced that God looks down and measures the sincerity of our Sunday morning praise on the basis of how much we do it the rest of the week. I'm convinced of that.

And He says, you know, this is just a farce this morning. This whole thing is hypocrisy. He said these people never, you know, put up their hands and so on and so forth.

You know, that's just religiosity. Because out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks. And if the mouth only speaks, you know, for 20 minutes or 30 minutes on a Sunday morning, something is wrong.

There's no incense. There's no praise. And then He says, nor were they offering the burnt offerings in verse 7. Now, the burnt offering was a voluntary offering.

The burnt offering was the giving of themselves, at least in the New Testament equivalent of that. And every pastor knows what it's like to, you know, begin to plead with people. Maybe the beginning of the year and you've had a little bit of a break over the Christmas season.

You're starting up Sunday school again. And, you know, a pastor stands up and he says, we really need some people to help us this year. You know, Sister So-and-So is retiring and Brother and Sister So-and-So are moving out of town.

We need somebody to look after the 7-year-olds. And we really need somebody to look after the 10-year-olds this year. And so on and so on.

And everybody's head drops automatically. You know, we get busy with other things. You know, because we know.

That's going to demand, if I'm going to do that job well, it's going to demand that I give Saturday night to preparing that little message for those kids. Praying is going to mean more than just delivering a message for, you know, 20 minutes in Sunday school. It means looking those kids up during the week.

Maybe they don't have, you know, a father around or a mother around and I need to, you know, take those kids fishing or whatever. If I'm going to do that job well, you know, it's going to cost me everything. And I don't want to volunteer.

Why don't I want to volunteer? Because I'm not praying, I'm not seeking God, and I'm not in the relationship I should be with God. And quite frankly, I couldn't care less about the house of God. Now, this is the background.

He says, this is what happened. This is why they ended up in the place that they ended up. And it's hard, isn't it, to get people to volunteer when they're not in the right relationship with God.

In one sense, you don't want them volunteering when they're not in the right relationship with God, but in another sense, again, it's sad that they're not willing because they know they're not right with God. Verse 8. Therefore, because of all of this, therefore, the wrath of the Lord was against Judah and Jerusalem. The wrath of the Lord, the anger of God was against His own people.

We don't hear much about the wrath of God. We don't hear much about the anger of God, do we? These days, you know, we have made God into sort of a giant teddy bear almost. We've overemphasized the Father heart of God and we need to emphasize that.

We've got a generation that needs both sides. They need to know that God is the King. They need the discipline and sort of the regiment that comes because they haven't been under any sort of discipline.

But on the other hand, they haven't known the love of the Father. And so they need sort of both sides. But we've overemphasized, at least in some circles, the Father heart of God to the detriment.

He is a God that gets angry. He gets angry with our sin. He gets angry with our apostasy.

He gets angry with the waywardness and the lukewarmness of our lives. And He says, because of this, because of all these things, God's anger is against you. He's made you an object of horror, of hissing, as you see with your own eyes.

For behold, our fathers have fallen by the sword. And notice again, this is all part of the therefore. Because of what He says in verses 6 and 7, He says, therefore.

Therefore, God is against you. Therefore, your fathers are dying. Now we can look at that two ways, obviously physical death, but spiritual death especially.

You see, when all these things begin to disappear in our life, then we begin to die. It isn't too long before we're dead. It isn't too long before we never go to the house of God, we never pray, we never get involved in reading the Word of God, discussing the Word of God with others.

We're dead. But we can also be dead physically. The Bible says if you don't discern the body correctly, for this cause many among you are weak and sick and what, a number have gone to a premature death.

So it can be physical as well. Hardly ever heard anybody preach on that verse from the New Testament. For this cause many, not just a few, not just an occasional thing that you hear about in Tulsa or, you know, something that goes on in New York State or California, no.

For this cause many among you are weak and you're sickly and a number have already died prematurely. Why? Because they are not in the relationship with God they should be. They're not discerning the body the way they should be.

So our fathers have fallen by the sword. Our sons and our daughters and our wives are in captivity because of this. In other words our wives are not in the place that they should be in.

They're in bondage too, our kids. Our sons and our daughters are in captivity. Captivity to what? Alcohol, to sex, to pornography, to all sorts of things.

Our teenagers, we've got a whole generation again that is in captivity. Why? Because the fathers have not been in the place they should be. They're not seeking God, they're not praying the way they should be praying.

They're not attending the house of God or they send their kids to Sunday school but they don't go. And then they wonder why is my kid no longer interested in the house of God? Why is my kid just being arrested for taking drugs? Why is my kid, you know, drinking alcohol behind my back? Why is my kid smoking at the back of the church? Why is he in captivity? Why? Because the fathers have not been in the place that they should be. Verse 10, Hezekiah now, now it is in my heart to make a covenant with the Lord, the God of Israel that his burning anger may turn away from us.

Hezekiah is determined, God we are going to put an end to all of this. We're going to get the house of God back functioning the way you intended it to function. We want the house of God restored the way you want it to function Lord.

And it's in my heart, Lord you placed it in my heart. We need to get something in our heart. God is jealous about His house.

It is the number one priority, the house of God. I appreciate America, I'm adopted if you like, I was born in England but lived here most of my life and I couldn't help but hear many of the prayers during the elections. It was as though God was dependent on America to get the job done.

He's not. It's His church. I will build my church, not the White House, not America.

You know, we've got to get back to an understanding God has got one instrument that He is passionate about. It isn't America, it's not Britain, it's not Israel, it's not any other nation in that sense. It is the church.

I will build my church. The church which is my body. And that's what He's wanting to operate correctly.

And so He gathers these people together and He says, My sons do not be negligent now. Verse 11, For the Lord has chosen you to stand before Him, to minister to Him, to be His ministers and to burn incense. I like this.

He gathers together these leaders, these priests that He's about to consecrate and He says, Listen, this is what we have fallen from. This is the ideal. How could we fall this far? God has chosen you to stand before Him.

I mean, this is the high calling. There is no higher calling than this. To be able to have access into the presence of God.

To stand before Him, unashamed. That's the highest calling. That's the highest function of the priesthood.

Not the outer court, but to go into the Holy of Holies. And then to minister to Him. What a privilege.

To minister to Him. I wonder how many of us really honestly understand and function in that capacity because the Bible says we are called to be kings and priests. And that we have the opportunity of ministering to the Lord.

I don't understand how the God who is the God of the heavens and the earth. The God who is totally complete in and of Himself. Who doesn't need me to feed Him or bolster His ego or anything else.

And yet, I can minister to Him. Like a father. Nothing greater than when your child comes in and wants to just spend time, jump up on your lap and wrap their arms around you and give you a kiss, you know, without you having to demand it.

I mean, you know, there's something that even though you're the head of the family and you're the bread winner and you can fix the car and, you know, repair the roof and all the other things and so on and so forth. There's just nothing that takes the place of that little one that in one sense, you know, can't help you at all, but when they just run in. You know, we have four grandchildren since I was here last.

We're still trying to catch up with the Ryans here, but I don't know if we'll ever do that. But, you know, nothing like one of my, our youngest is called Noah. And he's just barely walking around, but he's a real lover.

Every time he sees my wife, you know, he runs over and wraps his arms around her. I mean, there's nothing greater than that. God loves that sort of an expression.

That we can come into the presence of God and we can minister to Him. That's greater than all the missionary work and everything else. Spending time alone in the presence of God.

And then not only minister to Him, but to be His ministers. To go out from the presence of God again and minister on His behalf. This is what we've fallen from, Hezekiah is saying.

Listen, we've got to get back to this. This is the ideal. We've been groveling, at least under my father's, you know, kingship, we've been groveling at the feet of idols and burning incense and so on and so forth.

And we have forsaken Him. This is getting back to Him. This is getting back to that relationship.

Everything flows out of relationship. Ministry flows out of relationship. We can't minister for Him until we minister to Him.

Hezekiah's got it right here. You've got to minister to Him. And then you can minister for Him.

And you can burn incense. So they respond, verse 15, they assemble, gather their brothers together, they consecrate themselves, they went in to cleanse the house of the Lord according to the commandment of the King by the word of the Lord. Now notice there is one standard that God's house has to be cleansed according to.

According to the command of the King, but by the word of the Lord. In other words, the cleansing has to be this. A cleansing based on this word.

Not based on what is acceptable or not acceptable today. Oh, you know, there are certain churches, I call them churches, obviously not part of the church, but that are condoning homosexuality and marrying, you know, lesbians and homosexuals and so on and so forth and so on, you know. But the cleansing has to be

according to this word.

Not according to what is politically correct. You know. But naming sin as God named sin.

That's the cleansing. Well Lord, everybody's got this problem. No, I call it sin.

You know. And unless we cleanse it according to God's word, it is not cleansed. And so He establishes the standard for these priests.

Listen, it's got to be cleansed this way and only this way according to God's word. Verse 16, so the priest went into the inner part of the house of the Lord to cleanse it. Every unclean thing that they found in the temple of the Lord, they brought out to the court of the Lord and they carried it out to the Kidron Valley, which is the garbage dump.

Notice they went into the inner part and every unclean thing. It was not a superficial thing. It wasn't, well, you know, I've got a few major hangups.

No. Every unclean thing. That's when revival starts is when we get that serious that every last thing that we know is wrong is dealt with and thoroughly dealt with and cleansed according to the standard of God's word.

Lord, I won't permit another day to go by. This is what Hezekiah does. The first day, the first month, the first year of His reign.

I'm not going to let another day go by. This thing is going to be dealt with once and for all. I've struggled with this thing for years.

But Lord, tonight I name it a sin and I go to a brother that I can trust in. I'm going to make myself accountable to that brother but I am going to deal with this thing, get it out of my life, expose it, open the doors, let the light come in because if I don't, you know, the enemy is going to say listen, just keep that door closed. You've, you know, you've faked it now for ten years and people would be amazed if they knew what you're battling with.

And so, He begins the cleansing process. Verse 17, they began the consecration on the first day of the first month, on the eighth day of the month, they enter the porch. Then they consecrated the house of the Lord in eight days, finished on the sixteenth day of the first month.

Sixteen days of cleansing and He has got the Levites doing the job. I don't know how many Levites were involved but certainly there isn't just one or two or three or four. You're talking about a temple, not any bigger than this one maybe, I don't know how big the temple was but anyway it wasn't, you know, it wasn't twenty stories high and you are talking about a group of men, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, a hundred, maybe two hundred, I don't know how many, but certainly a large number of Levites and it takes them sixteen days to cleanse the house of God.

That's how thorough they were. They didn't leave one single thing that wasn't cleansed. They come to the king, verse eighteen, we have cleansed the whole house of the Lord, the altar of burnt offerings with all the utensils, the table of showbread with all of its utensils, all the utensils which the king had discarded during his reign in his unfaithfulness, we have prepared and consecrated, behold there before the altar of the Lord.

Everything now is ready to function again. Verse twenty-five, he then stationed the Levites in the house of the Lord with symbols, with harps, with lyres, according to the command of David and of Gad, the king's seer, of Nathan the prophet, for the command was from the Lord through his prophets. They are ready now to celebrate.

First of all there is consecration, then there is celebration. It is always in that order. The Bible talks about righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.

It is always in that order. It is never peace and then righteousness. No, the Bible says there is no peace for the wicked.

So there has to be an establishing of righteousness. There has to be cleansing in order to be righteous. In other words, things have got to be dealt with in order for us to have the peace of God.

And once we have the peace of God, then comes the joy of the Holy Ghost. And there cannot be celebration until there is consecration and dedication. And so now he is ready to celebrate.

The house of God is clean. You can celebrate when the house of God is clean. Isn't that right? Remember when Israel sinned, at least one individual, it ground the whole nation to a halt.

That was when, after they were successful in destroying Jericho. You know this major battle as they began to possess the land and they marched around the city. You know the story seven times.

The last day, seven times, blew, shouted with a great shout. The walls came down. The next day they went to take a little tiny place.

AI. And they said, listen, don't send everybody. I mean this is a pushover.

We won't have any problem. Just give us a few hundred guys. And they went and they were totally destroyed.

Why? Because of one man's sin, Achan. He took something that was under the ban. God had forbidden him to take.

And you know how Joshua found out? It seemingly, at least the way I read it, he had all the different tribes assembled and then family by family and he basically said, praise the Lord brother. Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord.

When he came to Achan, Achan come praise the Lord. It's hard to praise God when you've got sin in your life. Isn't it? You're the guy.

You can't do it. I can tell. It doesn't just flow out of you.

You're not right with God. You know, you can't say my chains fell off, my heart is free. No, my heart's heavy with sin.

We can't really honestly praise God or get excited about singing to God if our life is not right. But now they've cleansed the house and the celebration is about to begin. Verse 26, the Levites stood with the musical instruments of David.

The priests with the trumpets. Verse 27, when the burnt offering began, the song of the Lord began. Verse 28, the whole assembly worshipped.

The singers sang, the trumpets sounded. All this continued until the burnt offering was finished. Notice now, the burnt offerings are being offered.

You see, when people are right with God, burnt offerings are no problem. The Bible says thy people will volunteer freely in the day of thy power. God, when you begin to move again, people volunteer.

When we're right with you, Lord, I want to get involved in the things you're involved in. It says that the completion of the burnt offering, the people bowed down and they worshipped. It goes on to say in verse 30, the latter part, so they sang praises with joy and they bowed down and they worshipped.

Notice the celebration, the worship, the singing, the trumpets that are blaring. I mean, incredible praise that they haven't had for years in the house of God. ...purposes in our lives individually, in our lives corporately.

What is God's purpose for your life? What is God's purpose for my life? God wants to establish that purpose again. Hezekiah and all the people rejoiced over what God had done because the thing came about suddenly. You see, we can have a sudden change the moment we are prepared to put God first, open the doors and start dealing with sin.

It can be that sudden. Here is the house of God, maybe for years has been boarded up. No activity whatsoever, no singing, no rejoicing, no prayer, no burnt offerings.

And then within a matter of days, suddenly the whole atmosphere is radically changed. The whole nation now is beginning to hear about it. In fact, letters are sent out in chapter 30 inviting the people to come and celebrate the Passover.

And so the letters go out. In other words, evangelism if you like. We begin to tell people, don't we? When we get right with God, when we get excited about the things of God, we can't contain it.

Listen, come to the house of God. Something is happening in Oilton. You know, there is something going on in the meetings.

Listen, you've got to come back. Boy, we've had a tremendous time the last number of months now. Something is beginning to stir again.

You know, we get excited about it. We want to tell people about it. And Hezekiah and the others are beginning to, you know, they're writing letters, it says in verse 1 of chapter 30.

Saying to the people, listen, come, celebrate the Passover. For the king and the princes and all the assembly of Jerusalem have decided to celebrate the Passover in the second month. So it says that they began to celebrate it.

Verse 9 of chapter 30. If you return to the Lord, your brothers and your sons will find compassion before those who led them captive. Wow.

You want to get your kids out of captivity? Turn back to God. He's a compassionate God, aren't you glad? It says, for the Lord, your God is gracious and compassionate. He will not turn His face away from you if

you return to Him.

That's the good news. Listen, if you come in sincerity, if you come in honesty and transparency, you say, God, I'm coming to you tonight. I don't care anymore what people think.

I don't care if the whole church knows what I've been involved in. Lord, I want to get right with you. That's all that matters, Lord, is me getting right with you.

I'll tell people, although you don't need to tell everybody everything you've ever done, but you need to go to somebody. Tell them. Listen, I've been hooked on the pornography on the web.

I've been bound with this thing. I've been bound with lust. I've been bound with, you know, alcohol.

Or I've got a problem with this. I've got a problem with anger in my life. It's just about destroying our marriage or whatever it may be.

And Lord, I want to get rid of this and I don't care. Tonight is the night. It's got to be dealt with.

And so, he says, seek Him and He will return to you. Down to verse 26, it says there was great joy in Jerusalem. I'm skipping over a lot of this.

Verse 27, the Levitical priest arose and blessed the people and their voice was heard. Their prayer came to His holy dwelling place in heaven. God begins to answer the prayer when we get right with Him.

Notice that the prayers came to His holy dwelling place. They weren't bouncing off the ceiling. The heavens were not brass anymore.

When we're not right with God, we don't have access into the presence of God anymore, unless it's to repent. God isn't going to spoil us by answering our prayers when we're not walking in obedience to His word. You know, it's like a mother saying, you know, telling the child to take out the garbage and he's you know, refused for the last hour and then he comes asking for an ice cream and she says, here, have an ice cream.

Now, she's not going to reward him when she has told him explicitly what to do and he won't do it and she says, oh, you've been such a good boy. You know, God's that way. He really is.

He chastens, He disciplines those that He brings into His family. But prayer was a response again to them getting right with God. And then one other thing in verse 5 of chapter 31.

As soon as the order spread, the sons of Israel provided in abundance the first fruit of the grain, the new wine, the oil, the honey, all the produce of the field. They brought in abundantly the tithe of all. I mean, these are just some of the things that happen when we get right with God.

Incredible celebration, incredible evangelism, answers to prayer, and then giving. Giving beyond the norm. Notice they brought in abundantly the tithe of all.

In fact, so much in verse 10, since the contribution began to be brought into the house of God. We have had enough to eat, with plenty left over. The Lord has blessed His people and this great quantity is left over.

I mean, God began to meet needs. Isn't it? Haggai, where He says, listen, you know, I've given you a bag with holes in it. Amazing, isn't it? Sometimes we think, God, I can't afford to tithe.

I can't afford to give. I can't afford to do this. God says, listen, you can't afford not to.

You know, the car breaks down that week, something else happens, and so on. You think, my goodness, you know, I don't know how I'm going to make it. There's a way when we begin to bless, when we begin to give, God begins to give, and He says every need was met.

Not only was every need met, but there was a quantity left over. You get to the end of the month and think, boy, you know, for the first time in my life, I've started tithing. And I can't believe it, but somehow God seems to have stretched the money.

No, God can do that. Your tires last longer, your car lasts longer. I don't know how God does it, but He does it.

I can testify to that. God's faithful. But all of this is a result of the people making God the number one priority.

God, we have to get back and right with you. It begins by opening the doors. Don't put it off another hour, don't put it off another day.

The very first day, the very first month, the very first year of His reign, He went to the house of God and said, God, I want to get right. This house for a long time has not been the true house of God that you intended it to be. It's boarded up, it's not functioning, there's filth inside, there's no celebration going on, there's no tithing, there's no answers to prayer, and so on.

And I'm talking again, individually, we can apply it maybe collectively to a measure, but listen, I'm talking about individually. Is this house right with God? Does He have first place in your life? Or have you been unfaithful? Is there something else that you're drawing your life from? If it is, then you're involved in unfaithfulness. If that's the thing that's satisfying, it may be sport, it may be something else.

It may be money, it may be position, it may be a zillion other things, but whatever it is that you draw your life from is your way of being unfaithful to God. God, you don't satisfy. This thing satisfies.

I get more kicks out of fishing than I do out of Your presence. I get more fun driving my Harley than I do in going to the house of God. If so, that's your God.

The Bible says thou shall have no other gods before them. You see, it begins with something very innocent. Unfaithfulness to Him, unfaithfulness to the house of God, unfaithfulness to prayer, and all these other things in this downward spiral.

And then God turns against us. And there's no longer an answer to prayer. Our families begin to disintegrate.

Our kids get involved in different things, and so on. And here we have one of the great revivals. One of many in the Word of God.

But it begins again with the people saying, God, I'm not going to put it off any longer. I'm going to get right with You. Let's just close in prayer.

Father, You know every house tonight. Lord, You know every temple that is here in this building. You know the condition.

Lord, You know not only the outward appearance, but Lord, You know what's going on inside. Lord, You know the doors that are being closed. Lord, some closed for weeks, some for months, maybe some for years.

And no longer any real interest in the things of God. Just an attendance that's based out of ritual more than out of relationship. More out of duty than it is devotion.

Father, I ask tonight that Lord, You by Your Holy Spirit would come. Father, You would put Your grace on each individual. Lord, a grace that would cause those doors to open.

Lord, they would say, Lord, tonight I am so tired of going the direction I've been going. Father, set me free. Set me free from the saying, Lord, that has plagued my life.

That, Lord, has destroyed my relationship with You. Lord, I want this thing removed and only Your blood can remove it, Lord. Only as I confess it can Your blood cleanse me.

Lord, I don't care. Who knows? I am so desperate tonight to get right with You. Lord, touch lives.

Lord, touch lives. Bring back, Lord, this celebration. Bring back, Lord, answered prayer in the house of God.

Lord, restore families that have gone into captivity. Young people, Lord, that are not in the house of God tonight. Have Your way, we pray.

Why don't we just stand quietly and look at our brothers. I'm just going to invite you to come. There's some altars here at the front.

Why don't you come? Just open the door. If you need somebody to pray with you, why don't we do this, and I've done this, if I can take the liberty for many, many years. If you're kneeling, you'll be left alone.

If you're standing, I'm going to assume you want somebody to pray with you. Can I say that again? If you're kneeling, I'm going to assume that you want to be left alone. If you're standing, I'm going to assume that you need somebody to pray with you.

There's many, many times I would have come to the altar if I knew I could just find a place alone with God without somebody coming and trying to, you know, experiment with their latest counseling technique or whatever. You know, there's a time when we need to get right with God. We're mature enough.

We know what the problem is. We just want to be left in the presence of God. There are other times when I understand we need somebody to agree with.

And if you're standing, we will come and we will pray with you. Why don't you just respond? Let's get that thing right. I don't care how insignificant that thing may seem.

You know, it's the little foxes that spoil the vine. Sometimes it's just some little thing. But you know, footholds become strongholds.

It may be just a little foothold, a little area. You know, you may have experimented with a few little things just to find out. And you know that thing's got a hook in you right now.

Let's ask God. Hosea says, come and bring with you words. By that I mean don't just get caught up in the atmosphere of the altar.

Bring with you words. Be articulate. Lord, I'm here because I've got this sin.

Name it a sin. And I want cleansing. If it's two or three sins, again, name them.

Lord, I confess that this is a sin in my life. It's a sin in your sight. Your word says it's a sin.

And I confess that it's a sin, and I want forgiveness, and I want cleansing. So bring with you words, the Bible says. Just let God deal with that area so that we can carry that thing out of our life.

Ask Him to repair the doors. Lord, I want to respond to you. I want the doors to be open at certain times.

I want the doors to close at certain times. I want this house functioning the way you intended it to function. You can still come if God wants.

If you need to, come. Don't put it on. Don't worry about what people think.

It's what God thinks that matters. The rest of you can pray just that God would give His grace right now. This is very serious business.

Wonderful business, but serious business. Thou desirest truth in the inward parts. That's why He went into the inner part of the house of God.

That's the part nobody else sees. Nobody else knows about. The inward parts.

Only you know what goes on in the inward parts. The things you think about. The things you mull over.

The things you entertain yourself with. Nobody else can see, but God sees. All things are naked and bare before the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.

Let God just search your heart and deal with you.

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